

INDIA'S NATIONAL GAY & LESBIAN MAGAZINE
NOVEMBER 2009

PINK pages

ROY SINAI'S
PHOTOGRAPHY

THE ORIGINAL CRUSADER
Ashok Row Kavi

PINK MONEY
Travel, Tours and Merchandise

DELHI MEN'S FASHION WEEK



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Editorial: editor@pink-pages.co.in

Editor in Chief: nipun.goyal@pink-pages.co.in

Advertisements: kevin@pink-pages.co.in
www.Pink-Pages.co.in

Editor in Chief: Nipun Goyal, Indore

Creative Direction and Graphics: Vinay, Pune

Cover Design: Sam Thomas, Mumbai

Research and Development: Niket, Bhopal

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Ratnesh, Gandhinagar

Shiva Prasad, Hyderabad

Ravi, Chennai

Kishore Kumar, Pune

Ahana Bannerjie, Kolkata

Karan Sood, Bhopal

Sudhanshu, Mumbai

Ankur Rathore, Pune

It would be an understatement to call the response to the first issue of Pink Pages overwhelming. We have been flooded by letters from LGBT people all over India who have found a new voice in the form of Pink Pages. We are also thankful for the positive criticisms and loads of suggestions for improvement. We've tried our best to incorporate them into this issue, and will continue to do so in the future.

As the Indian LGBT community has now got its long desired freedom from Section 377, it's also time to thank those men and women who've made this momentous achievement possible. And the one name that is almost synonymous with the early days of the Indian gay liberation movement is that of Ashok Row Kavi- India's pioneering gay rights activist. The first person to speak out forcefully in the public domain for the rights of sexual minorities. Ananya Dhote catches up with this iconic figure at a café in Delhi and shares with us what Kavi has to say about his activism days and the new dawn of freedom.

Also, as Indian gays and lesbians are now slowly but surely coming out of their closets, what has sprung up is a feeling of togetherness, a community bonding. The enterprising nature of our community has been made evident in the way we fought against all odds in the battle for legal recognition, but now that it has been achieved, this nature of ours is also creating ripples in other fields. Most notably, through the power of pink money. Gay couples are what corporates prefer to call DINK- double income, no kids. And so, businesses in India have started targeting the gay community like never before. From travel and tour agencies catering to same-sex couples, and merchandise stores selling gay oriented products, we now have night outs being organized in five star hotels. And believe me, all this is just the beginning.

Also introducing to our readers in this issue is a new section- The gay agenda. Our commentators will share their opinion on matters of crucial importance to the Indian LGBT community. Harish Iyer discusses the latest findings of a national opinion poll that found that Indians have a long way to go before fully accepting gay people. Also featuring is Rohit Dasgupta's first hand experience at the Outgames, the spirit of which could hardly be deterred by the outrageous bombings orchestrated by a rightwing homophobic fringe. Ahana writes a touching personal account of what it means to be a transgendered woman in a country like India, where effeminate men are scoffed upon. Meanwhile men rocked at India's first all-men's fashion week in Delhi. All this plus a lot more in the following pages, so sit back and give yourself a pink read!

Letters to the editor can be addressed to: editor@pink-pages.co.in

-Nipun Goyal
Chief Editor

Congratulations!

Congrats to all the people behind Pink Pages! This magazine whets the appetite of all its readers..from stories to people...from issues to less known facts concerning our life and society. The first issue truly deals with all the aspects of LGBTs. Hope it can live up to the hopes of all its readers in future too! All the best to Pink Pages!

Rohith Kumar

I was ecstatic upon seeing this magazine, online, for first time. Also I saw renowned artist like Mallika Sarabhai's words of support over there. I adore her a lot. The words "India's national gay and lesbian magazine" sparked something in me, and I thought, "oh at last... now days of gays and lesbians in India have come. There is light, there is a world for us too where I can feel free". I thank you all who have made this happen. I hope I can live my world through Pink Pages.

Chintz Shah

Congratulations on this new effort. The quality of articles is generally good. However, there appear to be contradictions among the statement that "It will have many flavors to offer and will appeal to everyone in the alphabet soup of sexuality.", the "National Gay and Lesbian magazine" tag, and the focus which appears to be mostly by and towards gay men. How about having inclusivity reflect in "India's national LGBT magazine" rebranding, and more importantly, seeking out lesbians, bisexual men, bisexual women and trans people to write for it?

Devamrit

This gay magazine is so informative, and so unlike gay social sites which are more or less like free online brothels. This magazine I am sure, with few innovative marketing strategies would be able to make it to the BEST magazine of the nation. I think, the magazine needs to be more interactive rather than just plain articles. It needs some more visual attractiveness.



I "was" Bi,, I "am" gay!

I was disappointed to read this article. The author seems to be extrapolating from his experience and those of his acquaintances to conclude there is no such thing as a bisexual orientation. There are thousands of us who are testament to reality of bisexual orientation. I hope Pink Pages will give voice to the bi and trans folks and not just gays and lesbians.

Devamrit

Books and Literature

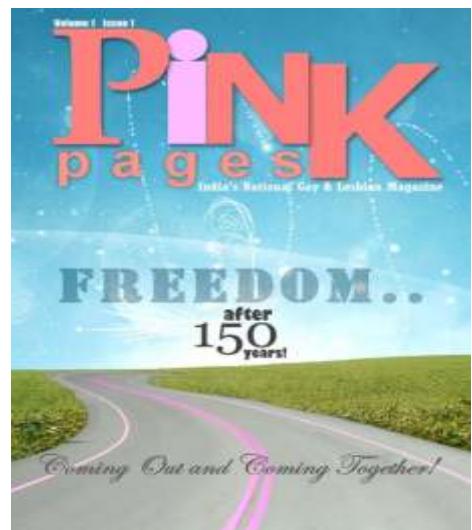
One of us should set up a bookshop where non-pornographic LGBT literature is available. It should also contain books by Indian authors on LGBT themes.

Ravi

'Maurice' is one of my favorite works of English Literature and one of my all time favorite films. I often wonder what became of Hall and Scudder. Of the two Alec was the only one equipped to actually work in the world. Hall for all his business class sensibilities lived in a daydream of romantic literature. As the article points out, 21st century gays and lesbians demand social equality. Have we any choice? There is no greenwood for us to run off to.

Cundiff

**Correction: The previous issue of Pink Pages mistakenly mentioned Aham, instead of Kishore Kumar as the writer of the poem 'He'. The error is regretted.



Freedom... After 150 years!

I am so happy for all my beloved brothers & sisters in India who may now arm up with love and come out from the shadows! On the day the law changed, I met a straight Indian who I know & who is against gays. Just recently he had told me, that freedom for gays would never happen in India- "at least not in the next 500 years". So when I saw him on 2nd of July, I greeted him with a bright grin and said: "not in 500 years, ya?!"

Guenter

The original crusader

Just until a few days back, Ashok Row Kavi seemed like an elusive figure-a name predominantly associated with Bombay Dost, Humsafar Trust, gay activism and journalism. If I rewind my life two years, it was a name I often caught among the plethora of results for my frantic Google searches on 'gay India'! Even in my ignorance, as I read those tidbits about him, I hardly understood a thing, though; for a self-denying homosexual, it was like a flicker of light in darkness. Just reading about a frontrunner LGBT activist that I was unaware of made me feel happy about my 'gaiety'! So, after those painful years of gay soul searching, here I stood outside Café Coffee Day, along with my co-interviewer cum fellow activist cum girlfriend, waiting for my long time elusive gay role model. As we stepped into the Café, the elusiveness of the name that I had known a long time back, withered around this distinctive figure of a man wearing cheerful purple kurti, poised in a chair, reading newspaper. For the next one hour, talking to him over cups of black coffee and iced tea seemed like a spiritual enlightenment of sorts. His frankness made me feel at ease and his well-defined opinions were intellectually striking. I was wrong; 'elusiveness' is no word for him. Though, perhaps he, or rather the entire LGBT community still remains elusive to that bunch of 'straight' heads that kept turning to our side!

Early Life

Ashok's father played an instrumental role in helping him accept his orientation. Of course, it didn't come without a dose of lectures on 'proper sex'! At 13, Ashok was in love with the captain of the hockey team. "My father was an engineer...he told me that men

have plugs and women have sockets and you know, when they are together, the lights come on...I thought it must be unhygienic and I was horrified that sex happens with a woman" The rest of his words were drowned as we couldn't stop ourselves from having a good laugh! Since he had

Ananya Dhote talks to Ashok Row Kavi, the pioneering gay rights activist of India. A journalist by profession, Ashok has always held LGBT rights close to his heart. He talks about his early days, his coming out, his stint at the Ramakrishna Mission, and later on the birth of Bombay Dost and Humsafar Trust

problems dealing with his sexuality, he even ran away to a Ramakrishna Monastery to be trained as a Hindu monk. And those many years ago, his spiritual counselors advised him something that's billboard slogan of 21st century pride parades in India. "They told me that it was nothing to be afraid or ashamed of. You need to go into the world and sort it out". He is proud of his parents, his education and believes that being gay is only a facet among other relationships of the family. One might be gay, but he or she is still, a son, daughter, sister or brother.

From 'pink parties' to Humsafar Trust

Around 1986-87, Ashok used to be a part of a grass-root and rather



fun initiative, which they called 'pink parties'. It was organized in hotels among circles of middle class gay men. These fun-n-frolic parties had a ticket of Rs 80, which was required to be signed by two "known gays"! Gradually, it was realized that there was a 'market' for a magazine that could talk about the translucent gay community in India. In 1989, Ashok, while he was already a well established journalist, attended the 5th International AIDS Conference in Montreal and he realized that there, gay men were fighting for their very right to live. 80% of the HIV infections were among the gay community but only 8% of the government funding was available to them. In India, when it was already reeling under a lack of awareness about AIDS and a host of other problems, the situation could have been worse. Hence, Bombay Dost took shape.

Initially, it was a hush-hush affair. Only 600 copies were printed and circulated. But the response was overwhelming. It seemed that the HIV issue, which was the inspirational propulsion behind it, was only an add-on among various other matters that affected the sexual minorities in India. Tufts of letters poured in from not just the entire geographical expanse of the country

but even from a few foreign countries as far as Afghanistan. Bombay Dost was a lifeboat that people were holding on to, and a magazine would have been unable to provide a grounded solution to their problems. The only way to give a tangible support for LGBT community's concerns was to concentrate on them geographically and physically. Hence, they thought of starting a Trust in Bombay.

The core editors of Bombay Dost became the Board of Directors for this newly formed Trust. And so, Humsafar Trust was essentially evolved from the magazine. What started as fun weekly meetings among gay men and lesbian women at its drop-in centers is now an organization involving 200 employees, operating 17 projects, HIV/AIDS related medical services' clinics, routine visits by medical health professionals from reputed city hospitals and garnering support of various governmental and non-governmental socially sensitive programs. The target groups include MSM, transgenders, hijras and male sex Workers.

When he was quizzed on whether he is trying to work in close association with the government, he said that it's already a reality. Bombay Dost was registered a long time back. And, the Humsafar Trust operates from a government bazaar with various other public offices by its side. Also, Ashok is currently serving as the National Technical Officer with NACO. The underlying principle behind Humsafar Trust, also Ashok's own belief is that medical services are not only for socially recognized premier groups. It's a service to be provided by the government and all the people of this country should have a right and access to them. "Why can't a hijra have a bank account?!" he snapped. "And, why are there sexual health clinics for men but only

'reproductive health clinics' for women?! As if women are not expected to be sexual otherwise! And then, what about lesbian women?!" I agree, sir!

This one is for our Constitution

Regarding the 377 verdict, he said he would rest the credit primarily with Chief Justice A P Shah and Justice S Muralidhar, NACO, the Constitution and the judgment itself, while the rest of the factors contributed positively and helped to wheel us to this victory. "During the proceedings, it was the NACO affidavit that really counted", he says. The judgment has redefined privacy and liberty and it has references to sex, sexuality and gender. According to him, most importantly, it has defined a certain "constitutional morality" which gives me the right to wear a stupid dress and walk the streets. Another person can make fun of me though, as long as I harm no one, it's my right to wear that dress no matter how stupid I look! The next step would be a tough fight, though he wouldn't comment on what could follow this verdict..."Why, I have no crystal ball that can gaze into the future!"

Inequalities within the inequality

He recalls the time when he had an affair with a bhangi's son; he would often visit their house for lunch and this would leave his mother irked. "My mom is an orthodox Hindu and even today..." he says, "when my Muslim lovers or friends come to my house, her orthodoxy often centers round the fridge!" For him it is interesting to note that the 'gay aspect' is only a strand among thousand others that exist in India's social fabric. And, this strand is invariably inseparable from the others. He says, "'gay' is very much like 'jeans'!" It is

thought to be an import from the west, but the truth is that everyone seems to be aware about it. It is something comfortable that everyone wears, from working class men to upper class people. And, 'gay' is much the same. He interestingly differentiates between 'communities' and 'networks'. Networks are made among people who lie on a common social hierarchy. What we need to evolve are 'communities' which involve and integrate all social levels, from the top to bottom. At Humsafar Trust, he is doing just that! He also says that concerns of different forms of sexual minorities can be significantly different from one another. "I've got enough shit on my plate!" is his piqued remark expressing a valid argument that it is impossible to look after entire set of issues of LGBT people under one roof. But, Humsafar does provide mentoring and financial help to other institutions like Sangini that work in this field. They have collaborations with lesbian organizations that have their own niche of lesbian concerns like mental health and domestic violence.

Mocking the religious debate

"There are temples in India that marry men off! Hinduism has no problem with homosexuality except for that Baba Ramdev". He adds, "To be honest, I've never really understood Christianity" He feels that there is no need for any sort of religious backing for homosexuality as there is no active homophobia. Same-sex relationships may not be recognized, but they aren't really opposed. The problem creeps in when homosexuals refuse to marry because India still holds on to familial and traditional constructs of society. Not the fact that he was gay but rather, "How will you have children?", "Who will look after you in old age" were his mother's

concerns when he came out.

Back to Future

“The future of gay rights movement in India has to be grounded in reality”, he says. Highlighting one of the negative aspects of virtual activism, he asked that if a gay man is locked up by the police can an online forum summon a gathering of 400 people to protest against it, then and there. He said that as young LGBT people we often dream of leaving this country to settle abroad with our partners. But, as he himself witnessed, even a liberal western country like US has areas that are acutely homophobic. It is difficult to survive; “let a thousand flowers bloom”, and then he added a whisper, “999 of them are going to die”. When asked about Pink Pages, he agrees that young people from diverse backgrounds getting involved with activism in a positive way definitely builds a synergy of events. It is this synergy that gives a little but honest push to our rainbow-spangled cart!

When the air got damp with intellectual drowsiness, I began a

general conversation with him. “I don't really watch movies”, he said. He still stuck to his remark on Fashion being a bad, homophobic movie but did not agree to comment on the reason. In contrast, he said that Dostana was a movie he enjoyed. “Where else would you see a straight man having a pink car or a mother talking about his son's homosexuality?!“ The LGBT literary space, he said, is still very scholastic and academic, though he would want to see a few channels of fun and humor creeping into it. He glanced at me, and then at my co-interviewer cum girlfriend; he smiled and said, “I don't understand lesbians. Most of them are men-hating radical feminists.” I can't deny the 'radical feminist' part, at least for myself, but sir, we like gay men! A young gay friend of his from Mumbai had come in to meet him during the interview. He works for UNDP and said a few things about the importance of feeling comfortable within your own personal space, among family, friends and colleagues. Much in

the same position, we undoubtedly agreed with him.

It was one hour already. Talking about the groceries that he needed to buy, he got up to pay the bill. We stood up with him, perhaps feeling a little dazed. His phone rang; he picked up the call and followed his friend to the door. He turned and waved at us, we waved back and shouted a Thank you. A few things didn't change, like people around us that kept glancing occasionally, the infected atmosphere of candidness that stayed even as he left and my own keenness to talk to him for another one hour! Though, most of my presumed ideas about the 'gay rights movement in India' had melted into a thin, clear fine liquid, much like the iced-tea kept on the table. I sat down, looked lovingly at my girlfriend sitting beside me, and sipped my iced-tea.



Ashok (right) with Prince Manavendra Gohil at the Queer Azadi March

Out there at the Outgames

The 2nd World Outgames held at Copenhagen from 25th July to 2nd August this year has been one event I shall not forget. I attended it as a conference participant from Amsterdam, IGLYO summit. It brought together some of the finest activists, sportsmen and performers from all over the world under this umbrella of queer celebration.

On the first day of registration we were given a travel card which entitled us to free travel all over the city and a lot of free goodies and memorabilia. The opening ceremony was held in front of the city square and it would not be wrong to say that more than 50,000 people were there as spectators. As representatives of India, we walked carrying the national flag of India and the banner celebrating our sexuality and our country. We were met with a huge round of applause and appreciation as the six or seven of us walked down the stage with a proud smile on our face. There were almost seventy countries who were represented this year and it was really wonderful seeing the camaraderie between them. Following the inauguration, Ritt Bjerregaard the mayor of Copenhagen gave the welcome address and stressed on the need for unity in diversity and spoke at length about Copenhagen being one of the gay friendliest cities in the world. Right after this the theme song of this year 'Freedom to Love'

was performed which drove the crowd to a frenzy.

The Outgames started officially the second day with an open air film screening. The theme was Bollywood and Deepa Mehta's much acclaimed Fire was shown at the HC Oersteds parken with the added attraction of Hindi fusion music for the audience to revel to. Under a clear sky in the middle of lush, it was a beautiful experience. The next day had Milk being screened with Cleve Jones introducing the film and sharing anecdotes about Harvey Milk.

Rohit Dasgupta describes his days in the beautiful city of Copenhagen, as a delegate from India to the World Outgames, rocked this year by a bomb attack, but undeterred in spirit and brimming with the love of sport.



sexual and queer rights. Other interesting workshops were taken by Maya Sharma and Sumit Baudh. The workshops covered a variety of themes which the main conference session did not always cover.

Copenhagen had been completely transformed into this queer space with other events taking place all around the city. The Women Space, yoga, volleyball, The Outcities project (which showcased some of the gay friendliest cities of the world) and the Pride Parade kept the participants completely on their toes. The last day of my visit ended with a canal tour around the city holding my lover's hand and for the first time feeling free enough to be myself.

The Outgames allowed the assertion of that space and voice which remains muffled. It was a celebration of identity in its truest sense and the diversity even within the queer community was something that I would not have found out if I had not witnessed the unity as they form the seven colours of the rainbow.

The international conference began on the 27th with speakers like Thomas Hammerberg, Pervez Sharma and Sunil Babu Pant speaking in the plenary sessions. The conference also had space for almost a hundred parallel workshop sessions which were open to the participants and delegates. IGLYO held three workshops and on the third day I along with the IGLYO presented the outcomes of the IGLYO conference on the best practices of youth activism in the context of



Members of the Indian contingent at the Outgames

Pakistan Diaries

In my previous article for this column, I mentioned how hard it is to be gay and live happily and freely in Pakistan. Seldom do you come across openly gay men (I have never heard of openly gay women) and even then they can be out in certain circles only. Gay activism is non-existent in Pakistan due to anti-LGBT laws, all thanks to those who made full use of inculcating Quran and Sunnah as 'guiding principles' in the Pakistani Constitution.

One of my acquaintances conceded that he is gay but when through some desultory discussion I mentioned the word 'bisexual' he asked me the meaning of the word. As I explained it to him, he jumped off from the conclusion that he was gay to that he was bisexual, which clearly shows his lack of knowledge of human sexualities. I wouldn't be surprised provided that the word 'gay' is more commonly used and understood in the sense of insulting someone or telling them they are sissy ('Yaar, you are so gay!') and that means that the words bisexual and transsexual are seldom used in public. Most people don't even know what the word transsexual means. This is quite evident from the fact that when Shumail Raj (as far as I can remember, the only trans man of our country to come out) and Shahzima Tariq (a woman by birth) married and when they were dragged into court by Shahzima's family, most of the press mentioned Shumail as 'shemale' and headlines such as 'She-male marriage' could be seen in important newspapers of Pakistan. How ignorant one has to be to conclude that Shumail Raj was 'shemale'. She-males have male sexual organs right from their birth, while trans men don't and are born in a perfectly functioning female body. It's only that their mind/body

makeup doesn't fit together. As I have been quite open about my sexual orientation, I have been fortunate enough to come closer to what people think about being gay or bisexual, all thanks to their quips and witty yet homophobic remarks. This goes without saying that the stereotypical image of gays is not only held up popularly, as if muscular and manly gay men can't exist, but also despised. There is no doubt that Pakistan has a lot to learn when it comes to LGBT rights before it can even think of legalizing them. The main problem starts with religious interpretations which are held up

Nuwas Manto writes about the current popular perceptions in Pakistan about LGBT people, how stereotypes are reinforced by homophobic clergy and media people, but also raises hope that the Delhi High Court judgement will soon have a positive effect in Pakistan too.

against any kind of sexual behaviour apart from one prescribed by the mullahs. What is laughable is the fact that more than ninety percent of these mullahs have never had the chance to study diversity in human sexualities and the workings of human sexual needs. They legitimate their fatwas against non-heterosexist behavior from the works of men who lived in ages when scientific studies were still in their nascent stages. Since they have been brainwashed and indoctrinated right from the start of their madrassah education days, there are slim chances of their unscientific and backward notions against homosexuality and transsexuality to be changed.

Unfortunately due to Zia's Islamist laws, there is little hope and a lot of fear, when it comes to speaking for LGBT Rights. If Huma Yusuf gets away with writing about homosexuality in Muslim societies in a Dawn piece, (which was by the way not published in the newspaper but on its website. And quite interestingly underneath the article Dawn Website made it clear the views were of the author and not the Dawn Group, which they don't do in their newspaper at least) it is because she is writing in an English newspaper which majority of Pakistanis don't read. In a country where a convict can get away with reciting a Naat (praise for the Prophet of Islam) to a judge (Oh yes! That happened) and no legal proceeding whatsoever, what hope there is for a homosexual to stand in a court room and argue against irrational traditions and religious interpretations?

Still, not all is bad. When the Shumail Raj-Shahzima Tariq case came into the open, Jasmine Malik, a Pakistani political talk show host, quite openly invited two guests, one a lawyer and another an aged man (who belonged to a medicinal field as he spoke more about the role of genetics in homosexuality than anything else), both of whom spoke in favour of homosexuality (when asked about religion and homosexuality, even the aged one who spoke quite openly about the link between homosexuality and genes told Jasmine he couldn't comment on that as that wasn't his expertise). I don't watch PULSE, the show Jasmine Malik hosts but only Pete knows how much I respect her even if she hadn't uttered a single pro-gay word. Why? Because not many hosts would tolerate the tolerant people when it comes to LGBT issues!



Pakistani gays at the London Pride parade

Take for instance Nadia Khan, an extremely homophobic talk show host. Despite my hatred for her as a homophobic icon of the century, I still have to admit that Nadia Khan is Pakistan's Oprah Winfrey. Let me tell you an open secret. Anita Bryant and Baba Ramdev are nothing when compared to her. When the Shumail-Shazima case came forward, Nadia acted it out, from ridiculing them to actually stating how much she pities and worries for their families, and that how could an Islamic studies' student (Shazima) be so un-Islamic. That homosexuals, if not stopped today, would infect our young children and this 'disease' would spread. Similarly she took another shot at Thomas Beatie, a transsexual man, and world's first legally pregnant man. Nadia could easily have passed as a homophobic televangelist lecturer and to help her she included in her panel a female Islamic scholar to prove her point that transsexuals are sick. When a caller (who wasn't Pakistani) said that even if Beatie was wrong, it's his life and he should be allowed to be the way he wants to be, Nadia and her loyal faithful woman jumped in between the conversation exclaiming (yes, literally exclaiming) that what would she do if tomorrow her child asked her to be homosexual (and they didn't wait to listen to her answer- just dropped the call. Good tactic to handle opposition!)

Unfortunately even the liberal talk show hosts are not coming up and facing the issue, with some exceptions like Jasmine Malik. After the Delhi High Court's decision I asked a talkshow host to discuss the historical victory. Here is what she texted to me:

'...We are not ready for that yet. Not even for a dialogue. We have a long way to go before preparing people to even discuss this'.

I do know this all. But someone has to start. And if not these influential personalities (especially talk show queens who rule the TV lounge of several homes) then who? Not many people read Dawn articles and an ordinary person wouldn't be able to make as much difference in the perception of people concerning homosexuality as Ali Saleem (a.k.a Begum Nawazish Ali).

After India's historic Delhi High Court decision I was jubilant. No. I am not planning to move to India, not anytime soon atleast. But because of the fact that Bollywood, due to the decline of Lollywood, has become as much a part of Pakistan as India, it gives me hope that if Bollywood comes up with some serious cinema like 'Philadelphia' or 'Boys Don't Cry', then I will prove to you with my tears of joy: boys do cry!

That is the reason I have always emphasized on an internationalist approach, and not only a nationalist one for LGBT movements, since we all need to stick together to tackle our home-grown Baba Ramdevs and Nadia Khans.

Homosexuality is god's way of insuring that the truly gifted aren't burdened with children.

- Sam Austin

I am the love that dare not speak its name.

- Lord Alfred Douglas
From poem Two Loves

I can't help looking gay. I put on a dress and people say, "Who's the dyke in the dress?"

- Karen Ripley

I don't mind straight people as long as they act gay in public.

- T-shirt

Worn by Chicago Bulls z Dennis Rodman during a network-TV interview

Because History doesn't lie

When I sat down to write for this column about 'gay history' I did not know where to begin and what all to include within its scope. For, though the chronicling of the history of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people began only in the nineteenth century as the Christian-dominated western world finally began acknowledging the legitimacy of the gay community with the emergence of the gay movement, recorded history has never been devoid of the homosexual- his love, his hedonism and his heroism even in the face of unimaginable adversities.

And so when we trace the history of homosexuals, we need to go back four thousand five hundred years to the ancient Egyptian male lovers- Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum, from the fifth dynasty of pharaohs. To the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations where homosexual love was revered as sacred, and celebrated by Plato's famous work- The Symposium, which is still possibly one of the most powerful testimonies in defense of homosexual love available in any language. To the Greek legends and

myths, for even the king of gods, Zeus, was not immune from the attractions of the adolescent male. His abduction of the young Trojan shepherd Ganymede is a story that has been frequently depicted in painting and poetry down the centuries. To the pair of homosexual lovers- Harmodius and Aristogiton, credited with preserving Athenian democracy. To Alexander and his lifelong companion Hephaestion, and Julius Caesar's love affair with king Nicomedes IV of Bithynia.

Nipun Goyal takes a bird's eye view of nearly three thousand years of recorded homosexual history, from the ancient Greeks to the modern day gay liberation movement.

Indeed, closer home to the homoerotic sculptures of Khajuraho, and the unapologetic homosexuality in the Kamasutra. Not to forget the legend of Harihara- the son born of the union of Vishnu and Shiva.

However the period often referred to as the 'Golden age' soon ended with the rise and spread of Christendom- whose Biblical rhetoric against Sodom and Gomorrah ensured centuries of hatred directed against the homosexual. The papacy, which systemized the faith deemed homosexuality a heresy, and homosexuals began to be burnt at stake. However, such incidents were rare, and the Church was as much a failure in curbing homosexuality as every other homophobic government in the world has been.

Things took a brighter turn with the advent of the Renaissance age in Europe. Across the continent, especially Italy, which became the

cultural epicenter, a strong homosexual sub-culture developed in the cities. Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci are undoubtedly the most celebrated homosexual figures of this age. Michelangelo's David- that unparalleled epitome of male beauty was and has remained one of the greatest homosexual icons ever.

Seventeenth and Eighteenth century Europe saw a string of homosexually inclined rulers. Two British kings in the seventeenth century appear to have had exclusively homosexual interests- James I and his grandson, William III. During the same period, homosexual subcultures flourished in London, Paris and Amsterdam. The nineteenth century however saw a religious revival, along with the advent of the industrial age. Policing against homosexual inns in London became stricter, but was also coincided by a new found interest in the country's homosexual past. And of course, this was also the time when Oscar Wilde- the 'homosexual martyr' was arrested and tried because of his sexual orientation, in one of the biggest public scandals of Britain. It was also in the middle of the nineteenth century that science discovered homosexuality, and Freud- the 'greatest intellectual charlatan of the century'- came up with much of the modern mythology surrounding homosexuality. He proposed that all humans are naturally bisexual, and that heterosexuality is the normal goal of all healthy men and women. The 'deviants' from the normal path are the homosexuals. Thankfully, we now appreciate the fact that most of his theories were the product of his overheated imagination.

The beginning of the modern gay rights movement can be traced back





A gay rights demonstration in New York, 1976

to the creation of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Germany in 1897. Despite the law, Germany had a strong homosexual culture- where homosexuality was practiced in a largely liberal environment and gay magazines and newspapers were regularly published. No wonder Weimar Berlin was referred to as the “Gay Mecca of Europe”. However things took a U-turn after Hitler assumed power. Homosexual men were systematically and brutally eliminated along with Jews and Communists. According to estimates nearly 60,000 homosexual men were murdered in Nazi concentration camps in the largest act of violence against homosexuals in history.

But while homosexuals were being persecuted in Europe, rapid changes were happening across the Atlantic in the United States. With Kinsey's report on the prevalence of homosexuality in American society shocking most Americans, what slowly emerged was a strong underground homosexual culture through the 1940s and 50s. It was only in the mid-1960s that it was exposed to the media in general. But while gay bars and groups continued to operate clandestinely, they were constantly harassed by the authorities. The turning point in the history of gay movement came on 27 June 1969 when police raided the Stonewall Inn- an obscure gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village. Tired and frustrated by these regular raids and harassments,

gays retaliated in what is described as the Bastille moment of the gay movement. They resisted arrest and rioted against the police for several nights in the first ever incident of gay resistance. The next year the riots were marked with a small demonstration in New York by a dozen or so gay rights demonstrators. Since then the annual Gay Pride parades marking the anniversary of Stonewall draw millions of gays, lesbians and their families and friends to the streets of major cities around the world in a colourful celebration of sexual diversity.

Since then the gay liberation movement worldwide has assumed importance as a major human rights issue, as government after government was forced through democratic means to recognize the equality of all citizens- irrespective of sexual orientation. Today, almost all of Western Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South America, South Africa, and many parts of the United States recognize same-sex marriages/civil unions and have passed anti-discrimination laws. Last year, the United Nations passed a resolution asking all member states to decriminalize homosexuality.

India was the only serious democracy that refused to sign the UN declaration. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, a vestige of India's colonial past (long

repealed in Britain) continued to criminalize same sex behavior.

The first Gay Pride parade in India took place in Kolkata in 1999 with only 16 people attending. Last year thousands of gay Indians came out on the streets of Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai and Kolkata demanding equal rights in the country they call home. In 2002, the Naz foundation, a Delhi based NGO filed a case in the High Court demanding amendments to Section 377 so as not to criminalize consensual adult gay sex. Meanwhile several prominent writers, artists and politicians like Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Amartya Sen, A Ramadoss and Celina Jaitley have spoken out in favour of gay rights. A major victory in the struggle for gay rights came on 2nd July 2009 when the Delhi High Court decriminalized homosexuality in a landmark judgement. The Indian Gay Liberation Movement will be a test of time, endurance and most importantly, the liberal credentials of this great nation- which was founded on the principles of equality and freedom.



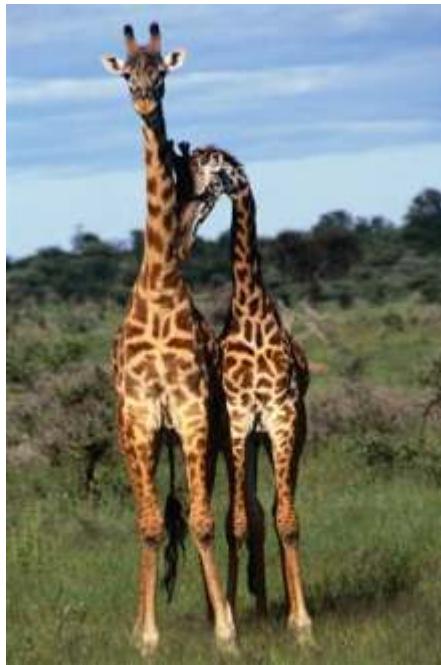
An Athenian red-figure kylix from the 5th c. B.C. A man is soliciting a boy for sex in exchange for a purse containing coins. The inscription reads “The Boy is Beautiful”

Out in Nature

Avi Roy writes in this apolitical article about new evidences that suggest that same-sex behavior in the animal kingdom is much more common than was earlier thought and includes not just sexual acts, but preening and coupling too.

When we talk about sexual behaviors, homosexuality in special, the first thing that pops in our mind are probably not flies, frogs, dolphins and other members of the animal kingdom. However a research by scientists of the University of California, Riverside, led by Nathan Bailey, published in the journal General Trends of Ecology and Evolution suggests that homosexual behaviors like grooming, preening or even coupling is actually common in several of these animals. Such behavior directed toward the same sex has been noted in a variety of animals, including dolphins, sheep, penguins and bonobos. He defined same sex sexual behavior as "...any behavior that members of the same sex engage in, that members of opposite sex also engage in, in the context of reproduction."

As such, such behavior could range from courtship to preening to actual



copulation. In fact, in some insects like the fruit fly, this can take the form of males courting other males by preening to them; which is a contrast to others animals like the albatross (a sea bird) whose females form long term bonds with other females and make nest together so that they can lay eggs together and rear them, suggesting a wide variety of behavior. Asked that why such animals engage in the acts when it does not lead to reproduction, Bailey clarify that "... sex isn't always about reproduction..." even in opposite sex interactions that look sexual on the surface can have other

functions like pair bonding or they could be involved in dominance or aggressive interaction. In bonobos in particular such behavior is aimed at resolving conflicts between males, whereas in albatross, it goes to the extent of same sex parenthood. Hence, same sex behaviors in animals are not necessarily aimed at reproduction. In a far removed example of the fruit flies, the behavior takes place in wild surroundings where the male attempts to copulate with other males. It is found that sexual behavior in fruit flies is associated with certain sex specific peptides and genes, which when removed from the flies; they tend to court or mate other males. Clearly, behavior of the birds contradicted the notion that homosexuality is 'unnatural.' For many this isn't just an academic subject and therefore, leaving political or religious concerns away, Bailey states that genome wide scans have looked into the genetic architecture of sexual orientation in human beings, to find that such behavior in humans are related to certain chromosomal locations. He further accomplishes that same sex behavior in humans is actually shaped by evolutionary processes.

"We asked ourselves what face we could give to the virus, and it couldn't be a pretty face." -- Dirk Silz, creative director of Germany's new "AIDS Is a Mass Murderer" campaign, on choice of Adolf Hitler as virus's human embodiment.

"I see it all as a joke. It doesn't upset me. God made me the way I am and I accept myself. I am who I am and I'm proud of myself. I'd like to dress up more often and wear dresses, but I never get the chance." -- Caster Semenya, gold medal winner at World Athletics C'ships, whose gender is in question.

Tête-à-tête with Venu Pillai

Tell us something about the Shringar Foundation.

Shringar foundation was established in 2001 for understanding the needs and risks associated with MSMs, IDUs, and has been successful in involving community at every step. We have outreach programs in Bhopal and Indore. We work with gay and bisexual men, transgenders, hijras and more recently, even with lesbian women.

What exactly is the work that Shringar is doing?

We started off with work on HIV prevention among female sex workers and MSMs- awareness campaigns and distributing condoms. We also work closely with similar groups in the region on the sexual health of the hijras and transgenders. We have been organizing conferences on these issues, and delegates from across India have attended them.

What are the programs that you are working on right now?

There are four targeted intervention programs running in Bhopal right now- two for MSMs, one for female sex workers and one for hijras. Also two such programs in Indore, and one in Gwalior.

Why the term 'MSM' and not gay?

The term 'MSM' (Men who have sex with men) is a broad umbrella term for men of varying sexualities- gays, bisexuals, bi-curious, trans men, etc. Gay men are a part of it.

How difficult was it setting up an organization like Shringar Foundation in a conservative city like Bhopal?

Yes, it was quite an effort. We

couldn't start it off as an organization for gays and lesbians. So we initially registered it as a group for AIDS prevention. We started working with the transgenders, and then moved on to gay men, and now even lesbians, though I must say that lesbians in the city are still much more in the closet than gay men are.

Recently Shringar organized a meeting on transgenders.

Yes, we had delegates from

Venu Pillai is the head of the Shringar Foundation- the only LGBT organization in conservative Madhya Pradesh. Pink Pages caught up with him at the Indian Coffee House in Bhopal.

Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and Chhattisgarh. We tried to reach a consensus on how to define the term 'hijra'.

People- both gay and straight, have a lot of confusion about who the hijras really are. What do you think was the conclusion of the meeting?

The official results are not yet out, but what we agreed upon was that hijras are male to female transgendered or transsexual people, who live in groups under the guidance of a particular 'guru'.

What has been the attitude of the state government?

Positive so far. We get much of our funds from the state government. The Madhya Pradesh State AIDS Prevention Unit helps us a lot.

Have there been any cases of

Police harassment of gays in Madhya Pradesh?

None that I know of. There was just this one incident when police questioned some gay men in Indore.

When media reported a gay party?

Yes, I was at the party, and I can say for sure that none of the rubbish that was reported by India TV- they alleged that we were organizing orgies in the hotel- had an iota of truth in it. All we did was have food and drinks, and danced to music, like in any other regular party. The police did question us after such outrageous reports were aired by that TV channel. However they didn't file any case when they found out that there was none. Apparently someone was trying to settle some personal scores.

When are we going to have a gay pride parade in Bhopal?

Very soon hopefully. There already are people who'd gladly participate if such an event were to be organized. Let's hope for the best!

Nitin Karani

Priya Ganoo talks to Nitin Karani, the editor of Bombay Dost and prominent gay rights activist from Mumbai, on the struggles he went through and why the cause of gay rights remains dear to him.

For someone who holds a place of such prominence in the Indian gay community, he possesses a rather cool and quite demeanor something that took me by surprise when I spoke to him for the first time a few months ago.

The person in question is Nitin Karani who has been relentlessly battling for the cause of the queer community ever since he came out almost a decade and a half ago. "I came out around 1993-94 when the atmosphere was very different from what it is today. The new media hadn't developed so much and misconceptions about homosexuals were rampant."

He met Ashok Row Kavi one of the pioneers of the gay movement in the country through a friend in late 1993 and this would be the start of not only a great friendship but almost a life changing alliance for Nitin. Through Kavi, he became a part of the Bombay Dost magazine when it was launched for the first time way back in the early 90's. "Ashok has been an inspiration and a very close friend through the years. He was a great support with his protective and nurturing nature when I was coming out. Most people fondly call him Amma for his nurturing ways." he says with a smile.

In today's times with the advent of internet and social networking, add to which a powerful and often sympathetic media the fight for gay rights does seem marginally easier. But public figures like Baba Ramdev calling homosexuality a disease often dictate the minds of a large section of the society into

feeling likewise. "The situation is much better today. More people are aware that being gay is not a disease or a condition." He agrees. "However, it is important to understand that having a friend coming out to you is very different from having a family member doing the same because then it's in your own backyard."

After the media coverage of the repealing of Section 377, the homosexuality debate has finally made its way to a dinner table in normal Indian households. "This topic has been shoved under the carpet for way too long. It's finally out of the closet and there is no way it's going to be pushed back in." asserts the Humsafar trustee. Nitin's association with The Humsafar Trust goes back a long way. A Communications and Journalism graduate from St.Xavier's college he was always more involved with Bombay Dost. A few years back though he was offered a seat as a trustee at Humsafar which he readily took up. "My role at Humsafar is a lot more decision oriented now. I have seen it flourish over the last few years and the journey has been fantastic." he says.

The lack of gay icons in India has been a major hurdle for the queer movement and Nitin has always emphasized on the same. "It's understandable that coming out is a very difficult task for sportspersons especially the ones in team sports. On the other hand if you belong to something like the film industry which is already so accepting and open-minded, it wouldn't be that big a deal to come out. That's the least you can do for yourself and your community."

One of the main organizers of the Queer Azadi March which saw more than a thousand people walk for the gay cause, Nitin was

satisfied with the response but felt that last year's QAM had a lot more energy than this one. "Maybe I was in that part of the parade which was a little down-tempo. But the oomph and energy at last year's parade just seemed a lot more."

Coming out is easier today but the road can still be very tough for some. Nitin has come across suicides by adolescent teenage boys and also cases where families force the children to go through 'therapy' for becoming straight. "Coming out may be a difficult task but is a very important step. If nothing just tell a loved one or your friends and that too makes a lot of difference."

A few questions about 'why not a straight parade' were heard and Nitin answers with a perfect punch for an answer. "Heterosexual couples flaunt their sexuality everywhere and they are free to do all the time. The parade is not just a way to feel proud about who we are but also send out a message to others stuck in the closet that we are with you."

This is another reason why he has been championing the cause of gay people all these years. "I could have spent all my time and energy doing other things but I would rather not. Simply because society needs to change its perception about our community and this is my way of helping our common cause."



Nitin Karani with Priya Ganoo at the Queer Azadi March

Polls and Polls

Once upon a time it was illegal to have consensual sex with an adult of the same sex in private! Once upon a time you saw people actually scan through online dictionaries for the meaning of words like gay, lesbian, fag. Not so long ago, if politicians did ever mention “377” we would jump, scream and burp in absolute enthusiasm. That was our yesterday, so tabooed and ominous, where just a flicker of hope gave us a surfeit of happiness. But openly, we were nothing. All our screams and belches went in despair; distorted voices were as good as silence, emerging from several closets, they fell to deaf ears.

Tracking back, from thenness to nowness, from masks to tasks, our metamorphosis was in tune with that of the politicos and society at large. Anburami Ramadoss came out very strongly in favor of section 377 to be read down. Finding hope trapped in the least expected quarters, definitely felt nice. Yahoo groups were flooded with mail trails expressing joy. Some were optimistic of a positive change; some thought that this was just another “gone with the wind” story. Many were buoyant and thought of this as the genesis of change. But this was short-lived. When Ramadoss quit, the flame was flickering, and what seemed as a possibility of a bright dawn seemed to be again, a dreary dusk.

Then came in election time. We were such a non issue a minuscule minority of the least possible denominator. Why would our voice matter in the chorus of the multimillion Indians? There were other causes that would be truly election winning! Why would they whine over a controversial subject in times when people were

desperately taking disparate measures to distinctly make a mark? Well, there were LGBT activists who met up with people from every political party to put forth their point... though many supported, the question of whether they would support the cause openly, or whether they would include the same in their political manifestos was still in stillness.

I remember having attended a show on NDTV, the topic being discussed was election politics in South Bombay, the issues addressed ranged from poverty to education, to space... not surprising though, we found no

CNN's State Of The Nation" poll results unraveled that 73 % thought homosexuality should be considered illegal, 77% thought homosexuality is unnatural, 60% thought of it to be a disease, 62% thought homosexuality could be cured.

space in it. As I said, we were largely a dead letter. But having the mike in hand, I couldn't resist asking what I wanted to know very strongly. It was okay and obvious a stand when it came to poverty, or education, no one would say “lets us be poor, or let there be more uneducated people.” I popped up the question to candidates Meera Sanyal and Milind Deora , “ What about issues like homosexuality? Where you are required to take a stand, it's not very comfortable, is it?” I proclaimed “I am a gay man, what about my rights?”. Meera Sanyal wasted no time in elevating her eye brows and saying with absolute confidence and self belief candidly on camera that she was for the decriminalization of

homosexuality. Milind Deora again spoke on camera, about the AIDS outreach and the inability of theirs to reach the homosexual population given section 377.

It came as a reprieve, this discussion that took a positive overturn. At a time that everyone was just mulling in sorrow and was sanguine about changelessness, came a bomb of a High Court verdict. Dismal dannng doing!!!! There was music, there was dance, and there was happiness. The average Joe of the LGBT community, repressed, depressed and silenced for ages was now out in his own spunk and sheen. The dailies that saw a handful of LGBT people repeated again and again, got juice, soup and scoops of newer people. Every daily went pink, some with gay news in practically every page. Funny it may sound, on 2nd of July I was unwell, and took a day off from work, I was sleeping away to glory just to be woken up by a TV channel for a telephonic interview, the interviewer asked “how are you feeling now that you are legal”. I thought the guy had gone bananas. I asked him politely what the matter was, and he very excitedly told me “consensual sex amongst adults has been decriminalized”. I was spell bound, shut and shaken. The voice on the other end said “Sir could we go online, could we have your reactions.” I could somehow manage to say, “ohh ohhh okay” and then I could hear the reporter speak, as she mentioned my name... I simply said “sorry, I need to gather my thoughts, I'm so happy, I don't know what it means, I don't know what it should mean... I just want to scream and shout and dance” and I did that, it was just the most uncomposed interview I had ever given, though very positive. And I did exactly that, I called up every body that I could. Came out openly

and personally to even those whom I hadn't. And had this gush of energy that flowed in me in jet speed. I could feel my heartbeat. I was zapped to switch on my Television and find our community on practically all channels.

But now that we were out and about, achieved what we were praying for, we needed to take notice of newer challenges, there were also more eyes that were prying precariously with an intent of causing harm. We achieved the right to love and make love, and some found it loud and lewd. Those who were silent about their apprehensions also timorously emerged. Some well wishers too opined that one should not be so out-in-the-open. And we in a common chorus asked "why not?"

But did we blow the whistle too much and jumped the gun with gay marriages galore, much to the discomfort of the perpetual pretentious moral guardians of culture and nature? This is a question that will find different answers. But one thing is now for sure there is more awareness, two males or females merely holding hands would not be just seen as "just friends". Awareness will definitely have a flip side. There were some polls conducted by leading dailies and channels which gave a lopsided view against the LGBT community. Example would be the HT- CNN IBN poll conducted in 16 cities where 3506 people were interviewed, the results were shared on the CNN show "State Of The Nation" the results of the poll unraveled that "73 % thought homosexuality should be considered illegal", "77% thought- same sex is unnatural", "60% thought of it to be a disease", "62% thought

homosexuality could be cured", "83% think homosexuality is against Indian Culture" and "94% of the correspondents don't have a gay or a lesbian friend". It's natural for us to rubbish such statistics. Yes, I did have a "what the eff" look on my face when I read this. "How does it anyway matter", I said to myself. But reflecting on it, I did realize that we as a nation are obsessed with statistics and numbers. Haven't we resolved the battles of choices in school "majority wins"... it's indented in our mind since then. (Is this how it is elsewhere in the world? I don't know) So it does psychologically impact people into believing that homosexuality is a disease and could be cured. It did boost the morale of some naysayers in my extended family, who jumped to the occasion and said "See, what the results are. Didn't I tell you". I did understand the impact of such polls, it didn't make much difference to me personally, as I am openly gay. But I could well imagine the state of those who have just come out to their parents, and convinced them of their sexuality as being natural and not something that was chosen.

Change is here to be! I am optimistic. Yes. Now that consensual sex between adults irrespective of sexuality is legal, the natural next step would be to campaign for marriage rights, adoption rights, property rights etcetera, etcetera. I personally feel, we can't just gallop without letting the dust settle. Let's thank our ministers in the UPA for taking a stand. And standing firm there. For the next step, let's not jump, let's hold our horses... What say?

*"We would have said:
'We'll take those three but
probably lose the
drummer.'" -- Simon
Cowell on why the Beatles
would have failed in the X-
Factor.*

*Bisexuality immediately
doubles your chances for a
date on Saturday night.
- Woody Allen*

*Closets are for clothes.
- Bumper sticker*

*Do not follow where the path
may lead. Go, instead, where
there is no path and leave a
trail.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The other side of coming out

Okay so you gathered up all the courage to go tell mum about it. No regrets, no guilt, no jitters. You have a plan. You are sure about this. And you are confident. Yes, yes, you ARE confident about this. After all, she's always been there by your side, helped you out in everything you did, always supported you. You've never hidden anything from her, besides she's a super cool mum, no? She'd really understand...yes she will.

And you take the plunge.

What follows this little incident, this casual conversation you just had with mum is an anxious, maybe angry, worried look, something you've never seen on mum's face. You wait for a response...just one word or a sentence. She is silent, as if thinking.

And then she says it. Those few words that resound in your ears, like an echo.

“Where did I go wrong?”

A lot of us, those of us who are out, have faced such a scenario, or in case of those still in, have dreamt of such a scene happening when they plan to come out. It hurts, a lot, to see your parents in pain, for no fault of their own. You do know that nothing went wrong, God was not merciless or anything, it's just natural. But when you see your parents like that, you do wonder yourself sometimes, “Whoa! What just went wrong?”

As has been the problem in many cases of coming out I have seen (mine included), what most of us often forget while we are so confidently marching up to our folks to say, “Hey dad and mum, I'm gay!” is the fact that even though our parents might react positively or neutrally (badly too), deep inside every parent asks themselves the

same question countless times, “Where did I go wrong?”

I was recently in Istanbul to attend the Istanbul Pride 2009. Among the gaiety (pun intended) was a small group of parents leading the march, proudly flaunting badges and holding placards saying 'Proud mother of a gay child' or 'I love you the same my child'. These parents were part of LISTAG (the Lambda Istanbul Parents Association), which is like a Turkish counterpart of PFLAG. An evening of pride was followed by a small dinner with the association, where I got a chance to speak to the various mothers

What matters is that people do make an effort to come out. And come out well. Not just a “I did it, now let's go”, but more of a “I'm here by your side, always”

and fathers present there. Each had a story to tell.

Parents talked about how they have always been concerned about their children, and when they found out their child was gay, lesbian or transgendered the thing that came primarily to their minds was how society will react, and accept their kids. We all know the kind of response our parents gave to our coming out, or might give when they do, but beneath that are layers; a complex thought process going on in which all they can think about is societal reaction, religious oppression, family ties, safety of their children, and a lot more.

Talking to these parents made me realize how we, the young LGBT population, have started thinking about coming out as something daring, something extra

courageous. Not that I doubt it requires a lot of courage, and I actually think coming out is a very important thing, but I surely shun the thinking that goes behind the minds of many of us, something like, “Yeah I did it. In your face, everyone”. Sometimes we really need to stop and think what is the best way to do it, and the best time. We need to understand that it really isn't that easy for our parents to accept it; we need to give them the proper time to come about and be comfortable. Many find it easier to confide in their mothers, but I have seen cases where the mothers were the ones to get extremely angry and upset, while the fathers understood and showed more compassion. It is not because they hate us, it just requires some time.

I believe that while thinking about coming out, we should not just think about parental reaction, but about their comfort, about making them feel okay about it. Most parents react badly because they blame themselves; many of them blame you and God for making you gay. In such cases, as well as cases where parental reaction is normal, I still suggest one just need to be there by their side. One sweet lady was guiding me about coming out to my parents during the Pride. I won't forget her words ever. She said, “When my son came out to me, he told me how much he loved me, he was there by my side every time. He understood that getting used to it will take me time, and in the beginning he ensured that everything was the same as before. When he wanted to introduce his boyfriend to me I wasn't prepared, so he just put it off till I felt at ease. We always teach our kids to be open and share things, and to be proud of who they are, what they believe in, and stand for themselves, and here I was, being a total hypocrite, hating him for who

he was! It was then that I realized what I was doing; I told myself it's time I stopped being such a wuss and came around. Slowly I realized that yes, nothing's changed. If my son is happy, I'm happy for him. He is my teacher now, it's not just his coming out, it's mine too."

And these words were truly echoed in the Italian documentary 'Due Volte Genitori' ('Parents Reborn'), brilliantly scripted and filmed by Claudio Cipelletti, an Italian filmmaker. I was fortunate enough to have access to a special screening of the same, and spend some quality time with Claudio discussing his documentary, and the effect of coming out on parents. To quote him, "Different parents deal with coming out differently. All we need to realize is that coming out is a more difficult time for them than us. They are essentially worried for us. We need to make them realize it's all going to be okay, that we know what we're doing and that it is perfectly natural; it's the way God made us. We need to assure them that we are confident people and can really take care of our lives, be us gay or straight. And we need to be there for them and be open to them, and make them feel welcome to discuss any issues they need to ask us about. That's all they want, and trust me, once that happens, it's going to be just fine"

That really got me thinking, about coming out, about parental reaction and comfort, and about society. While walking around Taksim (the hot-n-happening area in Istanbul), I bumped into my good friend Stuart Milk, nephew of Harvey Milk and a prominent LGBT rights activist himself. He had addressed a panel on LGBT rights the previous day as part of

the Pride Week following a screening of 'The Times of Harvey Milk', the documentary on which the movie 'Milk' is based. I began talking to him about coming out issues, and all he had to say were a few, but extremely powerful sentences, which Harvey had quoted. He said, "Society is never going to change until it affects them. People will always have a grudge against gay people, as it goes with any other minorities, just because the definition of 'normal' according to them is who they are. When people realize that we are everywhere, when they realize that they have one of us in their friends, in their family, that's when they'll realize that we are not so different after all, we're just people. And that's why coming out is necessary, to let people know that yes, we exist, among you"

They say a few words can change your life... for me Stuart did the trick. To really think of it, coming out issues are innumerable, but what matters is that people do make an effort to come out. And come out well. Not just a "I did it, now let's go", but more of a "I'm here by your side, always"

And that's how it goes. You just need to be there to answer their queries, to help them. Trust me, they need our support more than us needing theirs. And even if coming out seems to be a painful process, just remember, as Annette Hanshaw beautifully sung in her evergreen voice, "If you want the rainbow, then you gotta have the rain"

Ah the night rain. Nice breeze. That reminds me, I gotta wake up early and receive mum from the station in the morning. I came out to her the last time we met. I asked her to get my Pride badges and stickers I forgot back home, and without the slightest note of

change in her voice she said "Ohkay dear, anything else you want from here? Love you."

I guess it's gonna be just fine.

Every time you don't follow your inner guidance, you feel a loss of energy, loss of power, a sense of spiritual deadness.
- Shakti Gawain

Everybody's journey is individual. If you fall in love with a boy, you fall in love with a boy. The fact that many Americans consider it a disease says more about them than it does about homosexuality.

- James Baldwin

For a long time I thought I wanted to be a nun. Then I realized that what I really wanted to be was a lesbian.
- Mabel Maney

Closet Travel: No more!

India has been a prominent destination for tourists from all across the world for many years. With its ethnic, socio-cultural and geographic diversity, India has a lot to offer. While there are many tour operators working across India providing different customizable tour packages to tourists, there was none that would cater to the needs of gay couples in India. That was so until the November of last year when acclaimed fashion designer Sanjay Malhotra started

Indjapink. Indjapink, as their website mentions, is the first and only gay travel boutique in India. I had a conversation with Sanjay recently who was very optimistic about Indjapink and with the business opportunities in this direction.

First impressions are often lasting. The name of the business, Indjapink, itself sparks curiosity and intrigue in the mind of the visitor, as Sanjay tells me was the intended purpose, and I must say, it works pretty well!

Sanjay also says that the pink dollar, that is the purchasing power of gays all over the world, is huge and the industry spawning around it is already worth \$2 trillion. With such amounts of money involved, Indjapink seems a brilliant idea, especially when you consider its exclusive position in India. Infact, one tends to wonder why nobody came up with such an idea before, and then one is reminded of the intolerance towards gays in India. India is becoming more open now, and the changing attitudes are giving opportunities for such good ideas to bloom.

Indjapink offers its clients a range of different tour locations. But what really sets them apart is the gay friendly atmosphere they provide at their accommodations. The accommodations are luxurious, handpicked boutique hotels which

provide the clients with the perfect mix of luxury and convenience. Still less than a year old, Indjapink has received tremendous initial response. The reviews and the accolades received from the hospitality industry and the media have also been very encouraging.

Most of the clients for Indjapink come from Western Europe, US and Canada. They get around 20-30 enquiries and serve around 3-4 guests every month and even though they only cater to gay men, they do get many enquiries from the lesbian community as well. Sanjay says that currently Indjapink is dedicated to men only, but biased it is not. Their publicity



is mostly through word-of-mouth or internet based. A cursory glance at some of the travel forums showed me the interest for Indjapink in the gay community. There were also people praising the website, deeming it to be informative and well-designed.

Things are definitely turning up for the gay community in India and the future looks quite promising. Sanjay has a lot of plans for the future, one of them is about having exclusive guest homes for gay men in India which he says he is going to put it into action very soon. We at Pink Pages wish him and Indjapink all the best for the future



Castro: The world's hottest gaybourhood!

I got the ticket from the vending machine at the Sunnyvale Caltrain Station, crossed the track gingerly, and waited for the train to arrive. It arrived after 10 minutes. After a long, uneventful journey of an hour and 15 minutes, the train reached San Francisco. I was here at last! San Francisco, the gay mecca! I was here for only one thing. Not for the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, or the

rest. I had come here to see The Castro.

As every gay person ought to know, The Castro is the neighborhood with the highest population of LGBT people in America. I got off at the Castro, paid the cab driver



roommates, none of whom were tolerant. There was fiction, non-fiction, calendars, biographies of famous LGBT people, and various magazines. The bookstore in particular set me thinking. Why don't we have a similar bookstore in India? Very often I hear of a good gay-themed novel and hurry off to Odyssey or Landmark to get it. I am always told it is out of stock. Our Indian bookstores don't

stock LGBT literature since they don't sell well. What if we set up a bookstore similar to ADLB? I am sure there is a ready market for it as there are estimates that about 100 to 150

his fare and started exploring. At first glance, I was a little disappointed. Guess I expected too much. The street was run down. People were hurrying on their way to work after lunch. I just wandered aimlessly wondering if I should have planned the trip better. As I walked along the street, I came across a bookstore. It was called "A Different Light Bookstore." I went inside. The store had a huge collection of LGBT themed literature, none of which I could buy since I was living with Indian

million Indians are gay. This is also a mainly urban demographic. There were I agree, books of an objectionable nature in that store. But we needn't deal with those kind of books. This is just an idea to anyone who might be interested. I spent an hour there in the Castro and then explored the rest of San Francisco a bit. At four in the evening, I boarded the train back to Sunnyvale, tired but happy.



Gay people, well, gay people are EVIL, evil right down to their cold black hearts which pump not blood like yours or mine, but rather a thick, vomitous oil that oozes through their rotten veins and clots in their pea-sized brains which becomes the cause of their Nazi-esque patterns of violent behavior. Do you understand?

- Trey Parker and Matt Stone
From South Park, spoken by Mr Garrison

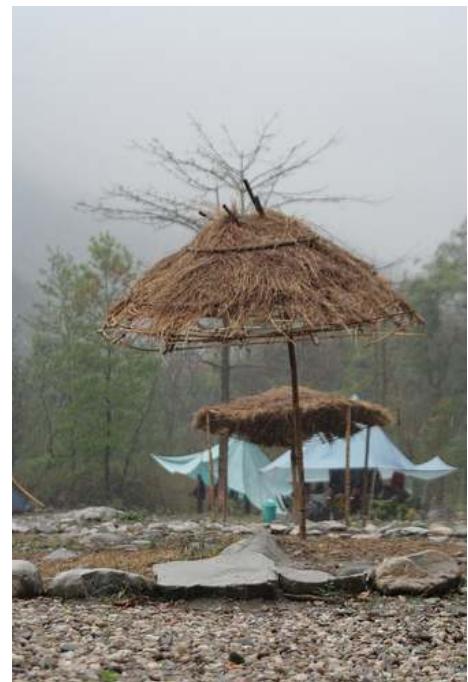
Homophobia is a social disease.
- Bumper sticker

Homosexuality is a sickness, just as are baby-rape or wanting to become head of General Motors.
- Eldridge Cleaver
"Notes on a Native Son,"
Soul on Ice, 1968

Pink Adventures in Dehradun

Camp Redstone, Zice Holidays seems to be taking the new-found social LGBT movement to the next level. And for once, their placard says “Rainbow Fun” instead of clichéd “Down with section 377” (which, by the way, is now quite obsolete!) And, Darpan Bhagat along with his team members, aren’t any politically correct group of straight people who “support homosexuality”. They are driven at core by zeal to make themselves and others aware, sensitive and understanding towards the much closeted lesbian and gay community in India. And the backdrop of this initiative neither includes sallow, shadowy walls of an NGO, nor that posse of people walking the city streets splashed with rainbow flags; rather, picture the serene mountains, open skies, chortling river meandering alongside and some L-G-B-T-S ('S' refers to 'straight', for the record!) bonding among fellas!

These are not visuals of some futuristic movie, though one could say these are the brewing beginnings of LGBT hospitality industry in India. As, Darpan Bhagat, one of the firsts in this field said, “I have lots of gay friends. Of course, I might be making a rough estimate but I’m telling you, nearly half of the people aren’t even comfortable with being open about their sexuality. My aim is to create a safe, hassle free environment for gay people, their partners, and even their families who would want to come holidaying in the camping trips that we organize” He tells me about their first trip, it was a two day, three night camp in Dehradun, complete with a natural backdrop and adrenaline stirring adventure sports like rock climbing, river crossing, bungee jumping and even a loud music dance party wasn’t left behind. About fifty people from the rainbow spectrum were part of the



event (which was also posted on facebook) and there was another set of people to make them feel completely at ease! The social enlightenment and fun apart, he says, there is immense business potential to be tapped from this field. There are two operational camps at Dehradun and Rishikesh; camps at Manali and Ladakh are in the pipeline. He plans to organize these LGBT outings once a month, if he does get a fair share of people coming in.

The average cost goes around Rs 2500/- per person, for one night and two days and it includes everything, starting from meals, adventure sports, to even proper and clean toilets! “Quality is the first and foremost thing we concentrate on”, Darpan says. “Our charges take care of everything excluding transportation”; though once you get to the camp, it’s rainbow heaven! So, go on, pack your bags and get your homosexuality as close to nature as it



Darpan Bhagat
Mob no: +91971 8349423
Email: darpan@ziceholidays.com

Go Rainbow Shopping!

A new-gen happening store catering to our community? It's already here!

The heading would have given most of you a vague idea already. Azaadbazaar.com is India's first LGBT Pride store. It's an online store which was launched officially this July, but has been constantly been in the Pride business since 2006, catering to Gay Bombay's parties, and the Kolkata and Mumbai pride marches.



Butch Biker Wrist gear steel Rs 200

Sabina: Many queer people go through a phase where they feel like they're the only one out there. So back in 2005 I thought- wouldn't it be great if there was a way to identify like minded people, either from the community or straight supporters? And that's why the first set of jewellery and accessories was created. From those early sales in GB parties in 2006, and the great response and amazing support, the idea behind the brand grew and grew until the launch of Jailbird t-shirts in 2007.

Simran: In late 2008 we decided to take the brand to a whole new level. We decided to broaden the product base to include glassware, mugs, accessories and home decor. We also took our t-shirts from being just

In a telephonic interview with it's founders Sabina and Simran, Pink Pages found out a lot about the store, it's working, problems and the response of the community to this novel idea.

PP: When was Azaad Bazaar launched, and what was the whole idea behind launching such a store?

witty one-liner generic t-shirts, to creating more fashion conscious cuts and colours, because we realised that while people like to make a political statement, they love to make it in style! In our small way, we're offering the community what we do best.

Pink Pages: So what makes your items unique; what makes them different from any other Pride store?

Simran: We're not just another online Pride Store, we're an 'Indian' Pride store, and to that effect we've tried to create designs that use Indian imagery (see 'Ladies special' train mug, 'Then You Win' mug, and Maa da Ladla, Azaad and Jalebi High t-shirts).



We also do not sell any adult material; in fact people have come to our exhibitions with their families and kids. It's a fun clean space to be in, and we'd like to keep it that way. We design the stuff ourselves and we create new products and designs every few months because we like to stay up-to-date.

Pink Pages: What does the general clientele comprise of? And where all do you get orders from?

Sabina: A Large number of sales go to the metros-Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Kolkata; however we have had people order online from remote towns all over the country. We have a lot of gifting within the community for birthdays, anniversaries and events,



Furry Rainbow Ball Keychain - Rs 100



Maa da laadla T shirt- Rs 399

as well as people buying gifts for friends and family abroad. Another part of our sales comes from foreigners looking for Indian memorabilia, and we also make custom designs for groups or events.

Pink Pages: What has been the reaction of the LGBT community to the store?

Sabina: The response to the designs has been overwhelming! In fact, we have had to reorder several designs every few months because we keep selling out!

Simran: The best part is that about 50% of our exhibition sales come from straight supporters, who love the cricket spoof "Out in India" mugs, t-shirts and other items.



Spike Wrist gear Rs 399

Pink Pages: So how has the modification of Section 377 changed the functioning, or sales of the store?

Simran: It has not affected the sales in anyway; however, we have done a "Jalebi High" t-shirt to commemorate the event. It is a fun university style design, and the "Est. 2-7-2009" date in the design is the date of the Delhi HC verdict.

Pink Pages: And what are the hottest items in the store, the maximum sellouts?

Sabina: Our t-shirts have been a huge success! We've had to reorder designs several times since the Feb launch, and we still cannot keep up with the demand. There are always a few items online that are sold out!



Love is Love T shirt Rs 399



Out in India Mug Rs 295



Rainbow Wind catcher Rs 300



Jalebi High T shirt Rs 399



Pink Sheep Mug Rs 295



Equality Mug Rs 295

VAN HEUSEN INDIA MEN'S FASHION WEEK, 2009

All the glitz and glamour from India's first ever all-men's fashion fiesta in Delhi held here from September 11-13. With over 20 exhibitors and 15 shows, it was all along a world class event.



Salman Khan presents a creation from designer Ashish
SoniReuters Photo



Dino Morea presents a creation from designer Samant Chauhan
Reuters Photo



Shivdasani presents a creation from designer SamantReuters Photo.



A model displays a creation by designer Rohit Bal (AP Photo/Mustafa Quraishi)

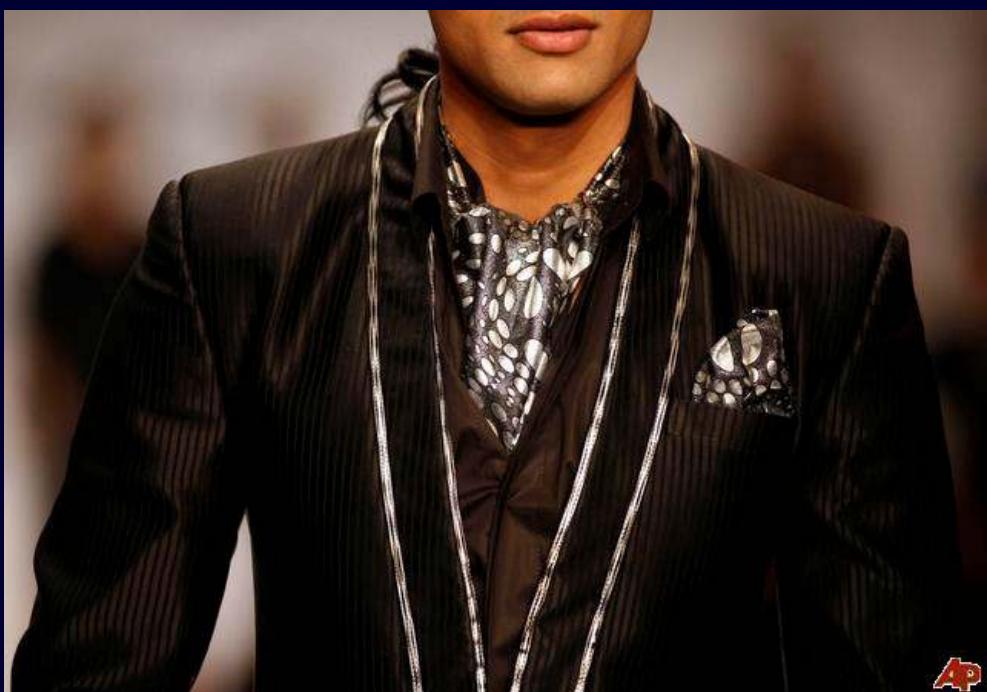


Models wearing creations by designer Rohit Bal applaud as the designer, unseen, walks the ramp (AP Photo/Mustafa Quraishi)



Models wearing creations by designer Rohit Bal (AP Photo/Mustafa Quraishi)

A model wears a creation by designer Manoviraj (AP Photo/Mustafa Quraishi)



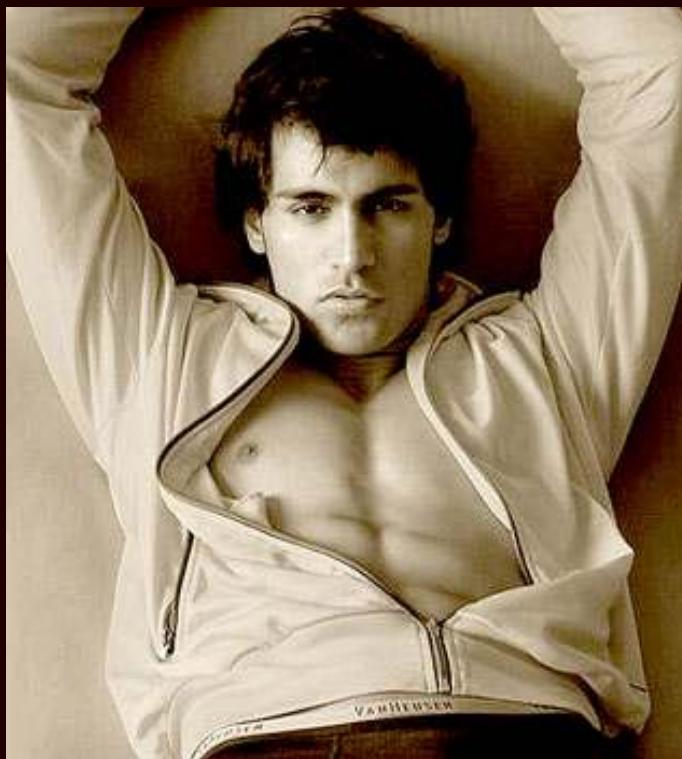
Models on the first day of the Van Heusen Indian Mens' Fashion Week 2009, Sept. 11, 2009. (Xinhua/Partha Sarkar)

Models present the creations of local Indian designers (Xinhua/Partha Sarkar)



HOTTEST MODELS ON THE RAMP

Inder Bajwa has an outstanding record of having worked with all Indian



Deepak Wadhwa has been among the Top 5 finalists of Mr India World 2008

Krishna is also among the hot models who walked the ramp at the Men's Fashion Week.



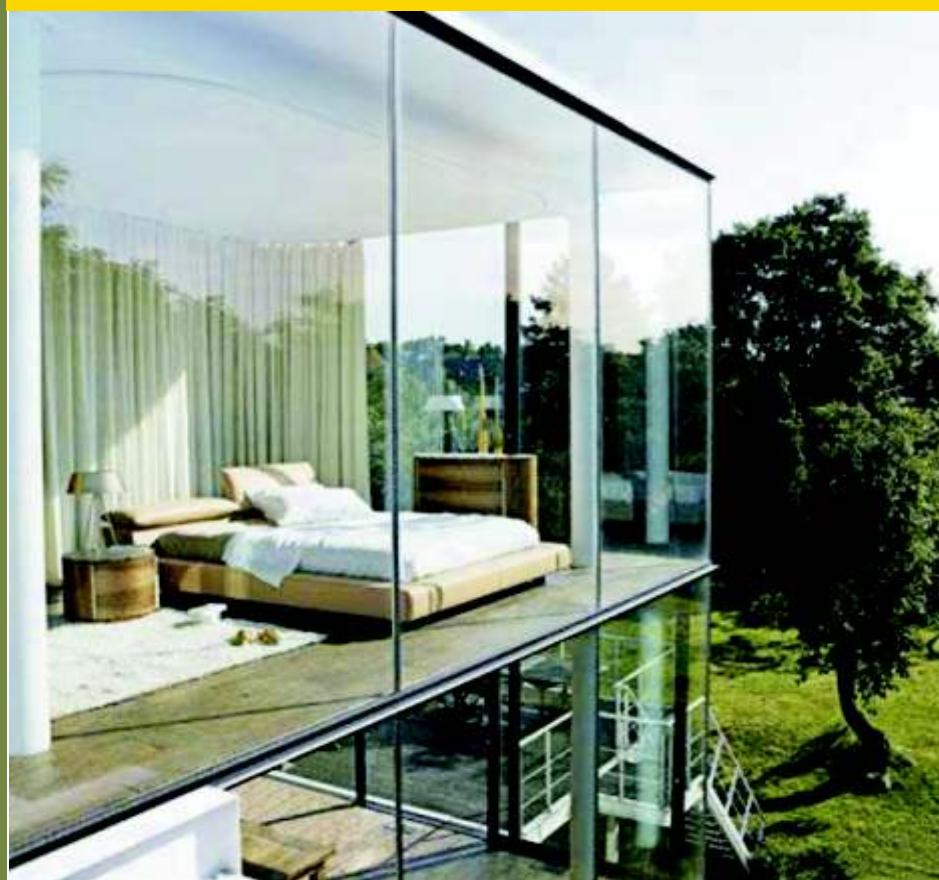
Asif Azim is one of the top ramp models from Bangladesh. He has graced almost all the glitzy locations.

Interiors Today

Welcome to our space of interior design. It's the sheer marvel and magnificence of this house that draws me to describe it. It is a perfect piece of contemporary styling. Allow me a tour!



You pass through the very straight lined wi-fi enabled gate, walk through the alley, enter the house and find yourself in the middle of the living room. A gleaming wooden floor and soft leather sofa in the centre. It is sophisticated, meticulously clean and intelligently spaced. The glass walls bring in the sense of openness and the feeling of being amidst the nature. Not a single electrical light source is being used during the day. The living area is very minimalistic and practical. On the left is a period fireplace with a tall pottery vase standing either side, displaying bouquets of sweet smelling flowers. Above the fireplace a huge gilded mirror.



Enter bedroom. Most immaculate and sophisticated. Again the entire vertical of the wall is glass giving an unobstructed view of the lawn in front and the sky above, the afternoon sun glinting off the cut glass. (Just imagine the moonlight summer night here)



Now the kitchen. It has to be the cleanest room imaginable. Its luxuriant and opulent oak panelling makes it look in sync with dark woods outside. All the kitchenware is seamlessly tucked away in the wooden cupboards.

The bath room is no less. King size and very inviting. The wooden log legged tripod stools and the wide window brings in the element of nature.



GayTech's Gadgets!

When it comes to gadgets, Latest is the Greatest! And for us fags and dykes, who'd rather be dead than disconnected, here's the hotlist- from cell phones to mp3 players, and laptops to Notebooks!

Cell Phones

LG Prada

It's not the greatest phone there is, but definitely a true fashion statement. Here are some of its features:

- Capacitive Touch Screen
- Music Player (MP3, ACC, ACC+, WMA, RA)
- Music Multitasking (Messaging)
- Video Player (MPEG4, H.263, H.264)
- Macromedia Flash UI
- Document Viewer (ppt, doc, xls, pdf, txt)



Camcorders

Flip UltraHD

The good: Shoots 720p HD video; high-quality video for its class; easy to use; uses rechargeable AA batteries; FlipShare software compatible with both Mac and Windows machines.

The bad: Somewhat pricey; no memory card slot; no cable included for HD output to HDTVs.

The bottom line: The Flip Video UltraHD may not be the sexiest mini camcorder out there, but it offers a respectable feature set and some of the best video we've seen from this type of cheap, YouTube-friendly camcorder. Specifications: Video input type: Camcorder ; Optical sensor type: CMOS ; Media type: Flash card

MP3 Players

Apple iPod's

There is nothing better available in the market when it comes to mp3 players then Apple's iPod line-up

iPod Classic

Space available. and lots of it With 160GB, you can carry your entire media library with you everywhere.



iPod Nano

Rock Music Roll Camera

iPod nano brings video to your music with the new built-in video camera. And for that extra kick: a larger screen and a polished aluminium finish in nine brilliant colors.



iPod Touch

With its incredible features, iPod touch is the funniest iPod ever. Listen to music. Watch movies. Play games. Surf the web. And that's just for starters.



iPod Shuffle

In bright new colours, your music really speaks to you iPod shuffle now comes in five vibrant colours. It's available in 2GB and 4GB models. And it talks.



Netbooks

Sony Vaio W

It's light, it's stylish, it's the all-new VAIO W Series mini notebook.

This little go-getter delivers the essential experienceemail, instant messaging, social networking in a size so small you can take it anywhere.

The VAIO W model comes in three vibrant colors- pink, white and brown. A more subtle shade of the exterior hue finishes the inside of the PC while the touchpad is lined with a splash of brightness.

The VAIO W makes a perfect second computer. Look up online recipes in the kitchen. Check sports scores from the garage. Check email without running to the home office.

This mini multitasker does it all in classic Sony VAIO fashion. The model features an isolated keyboard with springy and responsive keys making it comfortable and easy to use. Its carefully designed touchpad and mouse keys make the PC functional and mouse movements easy to control.

Laptops

Dell Studio

Studio laptops are perfect for home entertainment & multimedia usage. The Studio 15 and Studio 17 include over 200+ artist designs in the Design Studio.



The Girl I want to be...

I don't know if it is wrong to dream. I'm a dreamer since childhood. I dream every now and then, about everything around my life. I feel safe when I dream. It's the only place on this earth where I feel safe, independent and care free. There my people love for who I am and what I've become in life. There, the men praise me and my sisters love me. Men treat me like a princess, admire my beauty, eulogize my dress and play my servant, when required. I go shopping with my mother and my sister and my aunties, to get clothes of my choice. There, my mother gifts me jewellery and accessories, overlooking the cost of the gold, as my sister looks on with an envious eye. Daddy pampers me with soft toys and Barbie dolls and chocolates, and loves me like never before. This is a place where I feel like living for the rest of my life. But it's a dream, and dreams are dreams always.

The day I was born, was a great moment for my parents. When the baby first came out, as my folks say, he was shocked. When the second baby was out, he was even more shocked, yet happy. It was twins for them, identical or Siamese twins, as many would say. Both were male. The first kid is me. My parents were informed that it would be a girl and a boy. But, to their dismay, both were boys and still that made my father smiling. He never treated us differently. As a kid he gave me whatever I asked for. I liked playing with dolls. I liked wearing my elder sister's dresses and make-up. Brother was different. He played with macho toys- like guns, balls, bats and sometimes, destroying whatever he found within his reach. He was my father's favourite and I, my mother's. They sent us to the same school. At school, things got more different. I went crazy with colors, sprinkling them everywhere. I shied away from the boys, and hated sitting with them in their row. It was my brother, who then came to my help. Once the teacher, as a

punishment, asked my brother to sit in the girls' row for a month. I shifted undoubtedly. And I felt blessed. Months went by, the teacher forgot about the whole thing. Year after year, I kept sitting in that row and although, they laughed at me, never asked me to change my row nor complained to any teacher against my unofficial space in the class. New students came and left, some became very good friends. My elder brothers were the school marshals (head-captains as they were known in my school), so making fun of me or even ragging me was seen as throwing a challenge to them. My twin was very protective of me. I had the privilege of visiting and sometimes living in the girls' hostel owing to my closeness to them. I was the envy of many boys.

I swished when I walked, kept long nails, had somewhat a long hair, wore kajal in the eyes and was the only fellow, apart from the girls to color my toe nails. But that again was hidden under the leather, my shoes. I was a joke among my friends in the boys' hostel. To change or wear clothes, I used the bathrooms. Somehow I always felt ashamed of dressing in front of the boys. After my tenth standard, my parents frustrated and angry with me, ordered me to complete rest of my studies from home. Again, this too did not work out as they were too concerned about their self respect in the society and their circle. My cousins somewhat accepted me for what I am but could not gather the courage of supporting me in front of their parents. Family engagements were fun and frivolous, but then often turned out to be very atrocious for my parents when I was asked by my uncles to dance like a girl with them laughing at me. Mom kept a strong watch on me for these reasons. There, for the first time in my life, I felt goose bumps in my body whenever I saw this tall and fair man with short hair, with stubble walking in the house or talking with my mother and the others. I turned red out

of shame when he spoke to me for the first time. We are good friends till date, even though he know about me very well and still admires me the way I am.

Realization about my complete self, came late to me. As a kid I kept on thinking, "Why only me?" Why do I feel so good dressed up as a girl? Why being a boy I like wearing make-up? Why I can't manage to walk like a guy or shy away from men? Why do I crave for a man's warmth? Why don't I get attracted to girls or envy them when they are being treated well by a man? The big question for me all these years was a 'Why'. During college, I considered myself 'gay'. But was I gay? I kept on mingling with many people, since my teenage years, especially with men, trying to discover my inner self. The five to six hours of long conversation with different men kept me on the look for the answer. If I'm a gay, then how come I'm not comfortable with my own body? Why do I put up artificial breasts when I don the clothes of my roommates who were biological female? It was simply the way I wanted myself to be. I liked it when an autowala or a bus conductor addressed me as beti, didi or madamji. I liked when a guy would stop his motorbike to give me his compliment about how beautiful I'm in the dress. Internet and doctors made me realize that I'm not gay, but transgender. The doctors didn't say it directly, but I came to know about this when a junior doctor came asking about my case and the physician replied by saying I'm suffering from 'Gender Identity Disorder'. A search about it in the internet, and lo! It was all there before me. Through it I made number of friends from different parts of the world. I came to know about a surgery whereby I can alter my biological sex. Somewhere down the line, I felt confident about my true identity. I felt I too can be the one who I've dreamed of being since childhood. Since then, I started my life afresh with a dream to be the girl I want to be...

My New Year resolutions!

Another new year is approaching and I know that we'll soon get busy scheduling parties and waiting to see if anybody throws one in these last two months. Every time a new year starts I will become a bit nervous and I have no idea why. I guess it's because of the resolutions I have to make or is because of the terrific parties I have to attend or coming with one more excuse from my parents for marriage, whatever...this new year seems to be more terrifying because I have decided to stay back in Chennai and also there is a long list of new year resolutions this year...here is the list

1. Quit smoking (I mean cigarettes, it's been on the list for the last ten years)
2. Quit watching gay porn movies (the hardest one though, but I have to make it because I have lost few pounds of weight)
3. Avoid dating guys in the office (well it's hard to resist all those hot guys around with seductive smiles)
4. Find a nice wardrobe (I should be given some credit for being a Bangalore boy at least)
5. Quit having sex with my roommate (he is a straight and got a new girlfriend)
6. No more junk food (one of the ways of losing weight, I guess I can drop porn movies from the list if I follow this resolution)
7. Start partying more (well, this is the easiest one)
8. Focus seriously on moving to Canada (it's my dream)
9. Remove Arjun from the list of future long terms (of all bad times, it's still only for Arjun)
10. Savings (not shavings, well I should seriously listen to my mom)
11. More tours and travels this year (last year none)

12. Few more certifications for professional benefits (I've almost stopped studying these days)
13. A website and book launch which are gay friendly (I guess I should seriously focus on it with a commercial touch, need help though)
14. Hit gym regularly (ah...to make it interesting I should find a gay-friendly gym)
15. Buy a car of my own (well, that is one which I have been dreaming for last few years)

The list goes this way and still there are few remaining, now you guys would have known why I am nervous about this new year. It makes me more nervous when I realize some of the non-achievements of 2009. My mom forced me to have this habit of making new year resolutions since I was a kid and she also made me write it in my diaries. She gives me a new diary every year. I went back home this x-mass to Bangalore and at home I was checking my diaries of the past. In my closet I found few funny resolutions of the previous new years.

1. Quit being gay (this is the funniest resolution ever, it was in the list on 2000 and 2001)
2. Quit smoking (seems like it never quits from the list)
3. Quit one night stands (this has been one of the causes of I having group sex on new year eve every year, thinking that I will stop having sex with men from next day)
4. Change my name (well I found this resolution in my 1998 diary)
5. Don't mislead Preeti (she was my classmate in PUC and I was flirting with her for sometime, she had fallen in love with me and it took 3 years for me tell her

I am gay)

6. Don't vomit at parties (this was in the list of 2001)
7. Don't let someone drink your cum, its unhygienic for them (yuck, surprising even this was in the list of 2003)
8. Stop sneaking at boys restroom (I was caught in the college when I was watching my volleyball captain taking bath...god, he was hot)
9. Don't hit anyone on the face especially the nose (I almost got suspended when I hit and broke one of my volleyball teammate's nose in the playground)
10. Inform daddy why you took 100 rupees from his wallet (this was in the list of 1998, I was 13 years old then)
11. Don't let anyone think that you are younger than my elder sister (I wrote this when I was 11 years old)

These are the few funniest...Now you guys know why I am nervous about new years!

I just wish more of my fellow queers would come out sometimes. It's nice out here, you know?
- Elton John

*I'm not gay but my boyfriend is.
Bumper sticker*

Indian Street Fashion... Eeeesh!

Unlike what most of you would like to think, 'eeeesh' did not originate with Aishwarya Rai in Devdas. It is essentially Bengali and is used to describe a variety of emotions, but for now, let's just stick to disgust. Now my line of vision remains bound to the streets of Bangalore, but as far as I can remember, Indian street fashion tends to vary less than slightly in the various metropolitan cities and other towns of India.

I did read in the Times of India that the crowd of Delhi and Mumbai are more fashion conscious than the crowd of Bangalore but that's restricted to the college kids. In my 'dissertation', I am going to include the entire college crowd and the well-to-do adults of India and exclude the rest, because I don't think they can be trusted with anything better other than the costumes of the overtly flamboyant cinema stars.

Whoever said it was right - visual media goes a long way to influence the fashion sense of the people. Unfortunately, our beloved Indian cinema relies more on "OMG! I love gaudy!" costumes and jewellery, and we as Indians, I can say, have lost it! I mean just because most of us can't afford diamonds, gold, gemstones, rhinestones and silver and gold borders, doesn't mean we substitute them for cheap loud fabrics and sewn mirrors on kurtis, shirts, tees and jeans! Whenever I walk into my 'esteemed' college, I don't see

people. What do I see? Guess. Can't? Lots of curtains! Why curtains? Remember the scene in 'Enchanted' in which Amy Adams was cutting up Patrick Dempsey's curtains to sew up her clothes? Only, Amy looked pretty. The Indian wannabes? Not so much! Considering that men, excuse me, boys do it more often than girls, I am glad to say I am gay. Lol!

Let me explain. While walking down the street, ever notice the kind of jeans people around you wear? If no, then you should! If yes, then congratulations! You have just passed the test on powers of observation. More often than not, all the boys around you will be wearing jeans with embroidery. Embroidery? Embroidery fit for a curtain! Can you say "Ewwww"? Till now, it is the biggest sacrilege done to the sanctity of the Church of Jeans. Poor Levi! He must be paralyzed by the number of heart attacks he goes through everyday in Heaven. And Heaven signifies eternal peace. Yeah, right!

Leaving the jeans aside, let's delve into the world of shirts and tees. I used to think that the easiest way to commit suicide is by tying yourself to a chair and making yourself watch 'Baabul' thrice in a row. Apparently not! I revised my views the day I landed on my butt in college. It is to just have a glance at what people are wearing around you. You might die of incessant pain! I am sure Tim

Gunn would! I nearly died one day too. Why? Because on a bright, sunny day, when I was idly walking (read rushing) to college, I saw a guy wearing... guess what? A white shirt with rose prints all over it! Now that is bearable, you would say. But what was he was wearing to cover his happy place? A pair of jeans which would have been normal if it weren't half orange and half moss green! I underwent a Tamil transformation and screamed "Aiyyo!". And that's not it! Do you know what the icing on the cake is? Sources tell me that he had had two relationships with girls in his class! And I am sure they weren't blind. That same day a professor wore a pink shirt with violet roses and violet pants! The chick in 'The Ring' should have worn this combo to scare her spectators. And the other day, this professor who is as swarthy and fat as Govinda with a moustache rivaling that of Prabhakaran (remember the LTTE commander in chief?) wore a 'Let's be sunflowers today!' gay yellow tee with a brown and white checked hanky around his neck as a scarf! I am sure Prabhakaran must be looking down from Heaven and blessing him for continuing the dead man's reign of terror! Now comes the age-old trick question, "Do I laugh or do I cry?"

Anyway, I could go on but you know what? I am going to give you your well deserved rest now. I can hear those sighs of relief too. Why don't you swallow some aspirin for that headache

Chats & Statistics!

If you're a netizen, you must be aware of the way in which chat sessions go! It inevitably starts off with ASL and then goes on to ask you your "stats". Sometimes they ask you - "Since when are you in this line?" - as if being gay is some sort of a profession for which you get paid! It's insanely hilarious. This particular question is enough to promptly include them in my 'Ignore' list! Statistics! You may interpret stats in a number of ways. It becomes utterly tedious for me to keep typing the same stats especially when I am chatting with multiple people at the same time. I often type the stats in a notepad file and invoking my software engineering skills, use the CTRL+C, CTRL+V tabs to the hilt! Anyway, lately I have begun to wonder how to know that the stats the chat mate proclaims are true. I mean, a 24 year old guy could turn out to be a 64 year old one, a 28 inch waist could turn out to be 10 inches more, a large endowment could turn out to be nothing more than a peanut and so on! But never mind, it's one's own prerogative to believe in all these tall claims or not! There's probably no way by which you can be absolutely sure of the guy's stats or his intentions. Unless, of course the guy is generous enough to show you his cam! But then, that rarely happens!

For me, I have decided to devise a new set of statistics! I am sure no one has done so much research to arrive at these figures that I am about to disclose! I have always wondered as to how many people I may have met in the last decade. The answer has always been elusive. Human memory fails at times! And with me the problem of amnesia is so acute that I

don't even remember who I met a month ago or how many I have met or slept with over the years! I seriously never make that effort because hardly anyone bothers to keep in touch after that one night stand. There are only a handful of people who have stayed in touch (through mails, text messages, social networking sites and chats). But still, if I stretch my imagination and memory to its limits, knowing the fact that I first started to meet people when I was in my 11th grade, I must have met over 200 people over the last decade. Whoa! 200 and counting! People of all shapes and sizes! Tall, short, hairy, smooth, cutest of the cute, delicious hunks, boy-next-door types, self-proclaimed jocks/studs, married, guys in open relationships, elderly gentlemen, Gujaratis, Parsees, Muslims, Bengalis, Tamils, Andhraites, Malayalis, Kashmiris, Punjabis, Catholics, Kannadigas, Delhiites, UPIites, an occasional Bihari or Rajasthani and of course our own Maharashtrians! I don't really remember how many among those 200 I slept with. But then that's the age when your hormones are too much to control, the number must have been quite a handful.

Anyway, most of these contacts have got lost with time. New contacts have replaced old ones. People who did not care to keep in touch have been promptly deleted. That's why at any given time, my Yahoo messenger list, my phone book or my Facebook friend list only contains those contacts who I am in touch with! A certain friend of mine has an amazing Yahoo friend list. He probably has around 100 or even more contacts and he has

tagged each and every contact with their stats and his own comments! It's really hilarious to go through his friend list. It goes something like this... hotguybandra - 24 cute, ONS types xxxguy4sex - 26, big bore! m4mcolaba - 22, boy friend material... and so on...

The other day I was going through my phone book on my cell phone! I found that of 127 contacts on my cell, 72 were gay/bi. That's almost 56.7%. On closer inspection I found the following: I have not met 13 out of those 72 - 18%. I have had foreplay and oral sex with 29. - 40%. I have gone all the way with 14 - 19.5%. I consider 10 to be quite close to me, as in good friends! - 13.9%. I consider 4 of them to be in my inner circle - 5.55%. I wouldn't mind having sex with at least 12 of the 72 given the right opportunity presents itself (some of them for the first time, the rest all over again) - 16.7%. I consider 7 of them to be good enough for just a one night stand. - 9.72%. 6 of them are BFM - Boy friend material! - 8.33%. I would like to avoid 5 of them! - 6.94%. I have met 42 guys in the last one year; among them 30 in the last six months! Made out with 6 of them! Now comes my Yahoo messenger list! There are 76 people on my Yahoo messenger list including family! Of them 50 are gay/bi. I am in touch with all of them in some way or the other! Next, comes my Facebook friend list! I have 95 friends in my friend list. 52 of them are gay/bi. They share my friend list with my cousins, my school and college mates and colleagues! Most of them are also present in my phone book and Yahoo list! When I was first introduced to Facebook I created a so-called 'gay'

profile in addition to the regular! But with time, I got so bored of checking both, I decided to do away with the gay one and included the 'regular' profiles of my gay pals onto my regular one! And thankfully it has not ruffled any feathers till now!

The point I am trying to put forward is that each one of us has our own set of statistics and if you ever happen to spend some time in looking closely at these figures, you will discover a lot of facts about your past that will not only amaze you but may also determine your future! It may also throw light on what kind of a person you are, what kind of things you look for in a guy, what kind of sex appeals to you, what kind of guys you would want to avoid, who are your closest friends who really care for you and so on! It may also tell you a lot about how others see you as a person! My figures have told me a lot! They tell me that I've had enough! They also tell me to slow down and look out for only genuine people in the maddening crowd around. They have told me a great deal about the kind of life that I have led so far! And sorry to say, I am not happy about it at all. They tell me to keep my eyes open for everyone who comes my way. They make me aware of the past mistakes and help me to refrain from committing the same mistakes again! They teach me to be careful in the future and to be grateful to God for whatever he has given me till date! They teach me to be grateful to Him and realizing that life is too precious to be wasted in the pursuit of mindless sex! So, look into your phone book! There are a lot of mysteries to be unraveled. So put on your Holmes's cap and get going. All the best!

Out of the Shadows

Ankur Rathore

Few people were visible when I reached the August Kranti maindan- mostly volunteers, activists and some media persons. I wondered if this was because of the Swine Flu scare. The media guys started interviewing the activists and clicking photos. Then the countdown began and the numbers started swelling. Light from the prism started scattering forming a colorful Rainbow. For me it was wholly a new experience. Initially I was wearing a mask but later on my friend made me take it off and I started feeling more confident of myself. I realized I was surrounded by people of my own community. I was no more a stranger and felt more gay!

Then I met Vikram and Nitin- editors of 'Bombay Dost'. We spotted Ashok Row Kavi, Prince Manvendra Singh, Vivek Anand

and Kris Bass. More than twenty different NGOs like Humsafar Trust, Gay Bombay, LABIA etc. from all over India had come to participate. Lakshmi, the fabulous poster drag of the rally then came amidst much excitement. Soon, Celina Jaitley grabbed everyone's attention by marching through the Pride rally.

Folks started collecting under different NGO banners and raised slogans while dancing madly on drum beats. It all seemed like a colorful fantasy world. I was clicking photos at each footstep. The paarde reached its destination and ended at the Chowpatty Beach. But the real destination still hasn't yet arrived and we need to cross many hurdles to reach our goal of absolute equality in our own country.



'I am' is an initiative taken by Onir and Sanjay Suri's joint venture AntiClock Films Pvt. Limited. This project involves four films – Abhimanyu, Omar, Afia and Megha which are knitted together with the common thread of fear. The final product will be just one film including all the above.

'Omar' is based on police harassment of gay men, thanks to the now toned down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. When Pink Pages asked Onir why he chose an issue as sensitive as this, he was candid, "Someone has to make a beginning. Or else change will be impossible."

'Abhimanyu' is inspired by Child Abuse Survivor Harish Iyer's true story. Harish was abused at 7 by his relative. "It's a topic that has been ignored by mainstream film makers. Onir had heard a few assorted incidents regarding this problem that plagues our society. My story in one of the Bombay tabloids was a trigger for him to take up this initiative." Harish Iyer adds.

The 'I am' initiative is very unique as it gives the viewers to



Onir

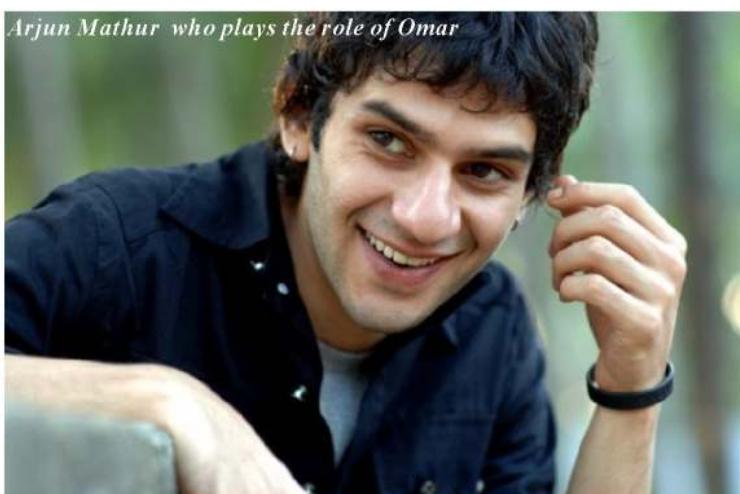
contribute to the film monetarily and funds are raised in the same manner. Onir and Harish are quite happy with the response the project has got so far. "A lot of people have been generous and that besides it's a cause of our children, our gay friends, our society, our mindsets – so we the onus is on us to partner in the making of this film" says a rather pleased Iyer. Onir thinks of this as a new milestone for independent films in India. "Indies in our country have never got the attention they deserve. But if filmmakers take a step forward and actually try to make audiences a part of the film making process things will definitely change for the better."

The films don't have similar stories but overlap in a very subtle manner where a character from a film is connected to the next in some way or the other. Says Onir, "I want to see these films creating understanding and empathy in our society." He's also outspoken in his concern for gay rights in India. "The recent Section 377 judgment has brought the issue out of the closet and there's no going back. I'm waiting for the day the Delhi High Court judgment will be made binding all over India."

The film will be up for release sometime next year and we are excited to see this project on the big screen. Great Going Onir, Harish and the entire team!

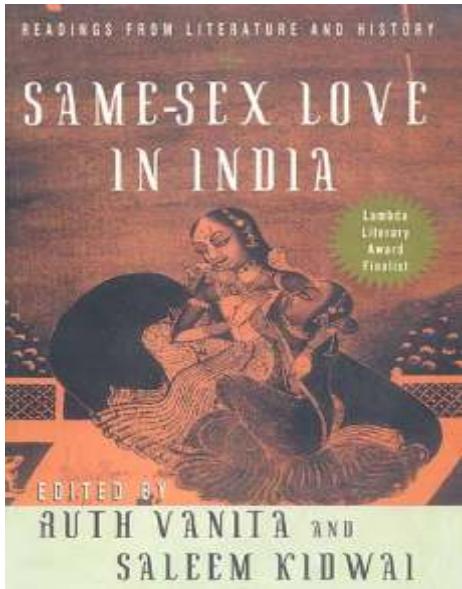
*Isn't it a violation of the Georgia sodomy law for the Supreme Court to have its head up its ass?
Letter to Playboy magazine, February 1987*

Arjun Mathur who plays the role of Omar



*It always seemed to me a bit pointless to disapprove of homosexuality. It's like disapproving of rain.
Francis Maude*

Same Sex Love in India

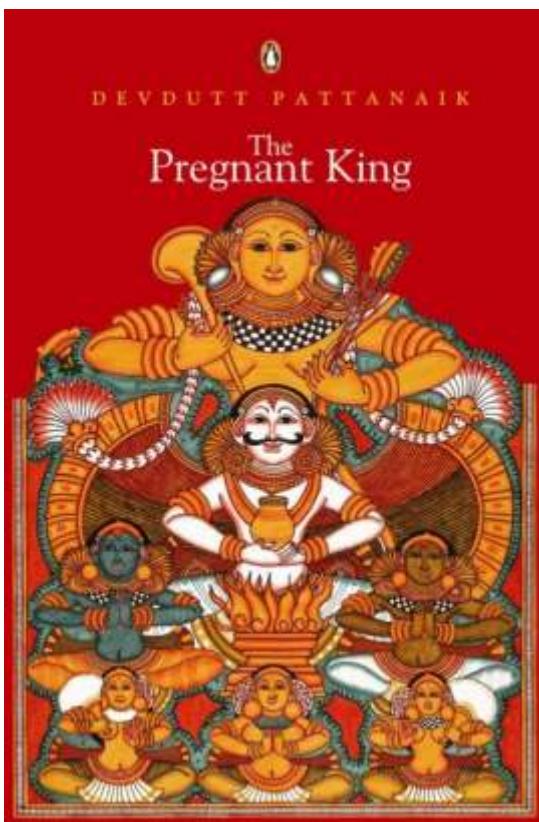


Some anthologies are born like water bubbles conceived by chance in a fit of unbridled, perverse passion and pass into oblivion in much the same way while nobody is looking. Some others are conceived in the sweet lucidity of love, are executed meticulously and with erudition, and remain to be remembered as wholesome indices to a genre through the ages. *Same-Sex Love in India: A Literary History* is a work that belongs to the latter group. The masterful execution of the work becomes all the more laudable if one considers that it is the first time the subject has been treated so comprehensively. The anthology traces, not the actual history of homosexual love in India, but the literary representation of homoeroticism in various Indian languages. Sex is not what the book deals with, but love: love between men and love between women that has been expressed in tones of poetic excess, beautifully written, running the gamut of emotions from pathos to bliss. A loving and

passionate attachment between any two persons may not find sexual expression, and hence love, not sex. The book is divided into four parts, based on historical periods. The first deals with ancient Indian materials, ranging from the Mahabharata to Vatsayayana's Kamasutra, expounding the virtues of friendship and love between men and love between women. The next part is a collection of writings from medieval India, in the Sanskritic traditions. This part presents a collection of writings from Sanskrit and other Indian languages including from the Puranas and the Krittivasa Ramayana. The third part deals with medieval Indian materials from the Perso-Urdu tradition, ranging from the lovesick verses of the Baburnama, to the poetry of 'Madho Lal' Hussayn and to those of Mir Taqi 'Mir'. The fourth part, dealing with modern Indian materials, draws from a large body of works in Indian languages including English, written after the late eighteenth century: from an excerpt from 'Firaq' Gorakhpuri (Urdu) to Vikram Seth's poetry (English), from Ismat Chughtai's Tehri Lakeer(Urdu) to Vijay Tendulkar's Mitra's Story (Marathi). Each of these sections begins with an introduction by the editors, summarising the social conditions of the age, placing the pieces that follow in perspective. These section introductions, along with the extensive footnotes and endnotes with references and explanations, make the book

invaluable. These are the actual pointers to the painstaking scholarship that has gone into the book. Intended for a wide audience Indian and foreign, gay and straight the book largely succeeds in the aims the editors have set for themselves, despite some lacunae, namely the absence of writings from some Indian languages. As the editors say in their preface, they have tried to make accessible several little-known texts along with those written by eminent authors. Another aim of this work, of great import, is to dispel the popular myth that homoerotic inclinations and 'homosexuality' as such, are alien to Indian culture. By bringing forth excerpts from Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist texts as well as from nonreligious and modern Indian writers, it shows how same-sex love has always been part of Indian culture, and how homoerotically inclined individuals have "contributed in major ways to thought, literature and the general good," and have been respectable citizens of society in their time. This flies in the face of every brand, size and shape of self-proclaimed moral police who say homosexuality has no place in India's culture. This reviewer opines that the greatest success of this book however, comes from the fact that young Indian homosexuals brought up in the midst of the modern misfortunes of societal and institutional homophobia, after reading this work, would walk away with a sense of pride, shattering the feelings of guilt, shame and self-loathing that they have hitherto accepted as unconquerable.

The Pregnant King



"It will not make sense to your logical mind. You will say, a parent is a parent, whether you are father or mother. But it is not the same. I cannot explain. You have to experience it. All I know is what I feel. I feel, while there is sweetness when your son calls you "father", there is more sweetness when he calls you "mother"."

These are the words of Yuvanashva, a king, who has 'conceived' and given birth to a son, and longing to be addressed as 'mother'. But he is never acknowledged with that, because as per tradition, only a woman can be a mother and a woman can never be a king. Faced with this dilemma, will the 'dharma' validate Yuvanashva's wishes? Will society accept him the way he has come to be?

The Pregnant King is a work of fiction by Dr. Devdutt Patnaik. Though the author's other works encompassing his research on rituals and symbols abundant in Hindu mythology are considered non-fiction, this novel of his narrates the story of the King of Vallbhi, Yuvanashva. Vallbhi was the

neighboring kingdom to Hastinapur according to the ancient text Mahabharata. The events mentioned in the book chronologically go parallel to the events that happened in lives of the Pandvas and Kaurvas. The style of writing and narration is very easy to follow, and though the plot sounds bulky, the writer has skillfully knitted every story into the narration. Another notable thing in this book is the fact that there are many places where sexual terms could have gone explicit, and in these places the symbolisms used by the author sound clever. While at times it is fun to read, at others the reader can feel his eyes moistening. This entire novel is an exquisite piece of information and philosophy that is not only understood by intellect but by the heart too.

Concluding, I'll quote the author's words that appear in the foreword of the book, "Did the events actually happen? Does it matter? Is it really about Shilavati, Yuvanashva, Shikhandi or Somvati? Or is it about love, law, identity, gender, power and wisdom? The impossibility of universal fairness?"

If adjustment is necessary, it should be made primarily with regard to the position the homosexual occupies in present-day society, and society should more often be treated than the homosexual.

- Harry Benjamin

If horse racing is the sport of kings, then drag racing must be the sport of queens.

- Bert R. Sugar

If male homosexuals are called "gay," then female homosexuals should be called "ecstatic."

Shelly Roberts

The Line of Beauty

Alan Hollinghurst has firmly secured a place in gay literature with his Swimming Pool Library, and his later novel, *The Line of Beauty*, which ranks both as a modern gay classic and as fine prose. The novel intertwines three different subjects: a gay coming-of-age story, the severity of Thatcherian Britain, and lives of a well-to-do British family and their friends. Many recurring sub-themes include country-house parties, gay cruising, drugs, financial manipulations, the advent of AIDS and rampant erotic duplicity.

Following his graduation from Oxford, Nick Guest, the protagonist of the novel, accepts an invitation to visit for a few weeks his college friend Toby, and his wealthy London family. He eventually rents a small attic room with them, coming to be regarded as virtually one of the family. Toby's father, Gerald Fedden, is a Tory Member of Parliament and a successful member of the Thatcher government; his wife, Rachel, comes from a wealthy and aristocratic Jewish family; beautiful son Toby is engaged to a rising young actress; daughter Catherine acts dangerously manic-depressive and suicidal, and Lady Partridge, Gerald's mother, who visits the family regularly. As the years go by, Nick becomes ever more deeply entwined with the romance of the Feddens and their luminous world of money and privilege.

Having come from a provincial family of a fretting mother and an antique-dealing father who winds clocks in the grand houses of the local aristocracy, Nick is unsure of his position in the world of gilt-framed mirrors and upper-class homes and is secretly ashamed of his own upbringing. About the same time, he meets a black civil servant, Leo, and he avidly discovers the

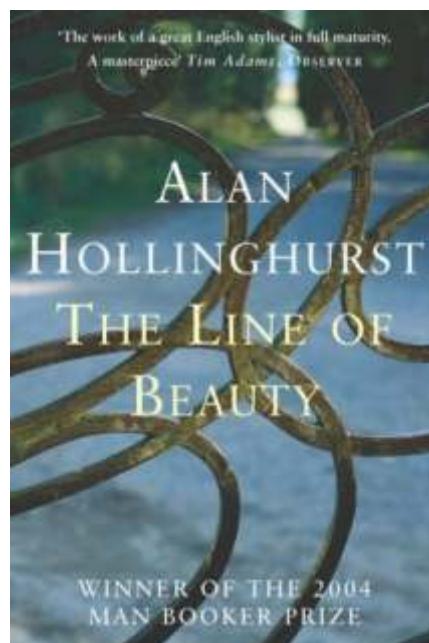
pleasures of metropolitan gay life with him.

A student of English, Nick is also distractedly writing a thesis on the master Henry James. When a dinner guest asks him, "What would Henry James have made of us, I wonder?" Nick replies: "He'd have been very kind to us, he'd have said how wonderful and how beautiful we were, he'd have

motif but also lovingly illustrated in 'the dip and swell' of a man's back and buttocks. The relationship between Nick and Wani is a secret one, and so are their adventures with coke, in line with the period in which the novel is set.

The novel criticises the high society of Britain and its social hypocrisy, among others. Also, The Lady, Margaret Thatcher makes an appearance herself in the novel when Nick, at a dinner party hosted by the Feddens, "his heart running fast with no particular need of courage as he grinned and said, 'Prime Minister, would you like to dance?' 'You know, I'd like that very much,' said Thatcher, in her chest tones, the contralto of conviction. Around her the men sniggered and recoiled at an audacity that had been beyond them."

Edmund White, author of *A Boys Own Story*, has said that Alan Hollinghurst "writes the best prose we have today." However that may be, Hollinghurst's style is admirable and one cannot have enough of it. Style, wit, social satire, and graphic descriptions all will keep you turning the pages.



The Line of Beauty
By Alan Hollinghurst

given us incredibly subtle things to say, and we wouldn't have realized until just before the end that he'd seen right through us."

Towards the middle of the novel, Nick becomes rapturously involved with Antoine 'Wani' Ouradi Lebanese, superrich, depraved and "beautiful as a John the Baptist painted for a boy-loving pope." Wani has hired Nick as an editorial consultant for his new magazine, Ogee, named after the curve that is Hogarth's 'line of beauty,' a recurrent architectural

If Michelangelo had been straight, the Sistine Chapel would have been wallpapered.
Robin Tyler

Yours' Emotionally

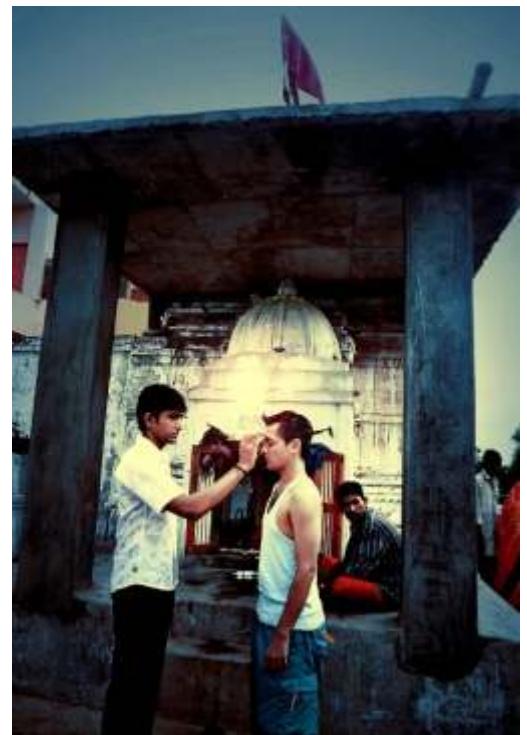
Ratnesh

Sridhar Rangayan's flamboyant drama delves deep into the invisible Indian gay culture. The movie explores cultural identities and openly challenges the Indian gay stereotype. Based on the theme of struggling love, Yours Emotionally is vivid, honest and full of passion.

Two best friends, Ravi and Paul go on a vacation to India where they attend an all night gay party. At the party Ravi falls for Mani, a good looking but strictly closeted working class guy. The scene becomes rocky as Paul reveals his own hook-up with Mani, but the love again blossoms within the confines of the hidden subculture. Will the traditions and customs allow these two love birds to accept each other? Can they be together as long as their love is a traditional scar of shame?

According to the director, what is

interesting about the movie is the participation of more than 100 gay and transgender members of gay support groups in Mumbai and Gujarat. It is indeed appreciable that the movie has been shot so openly in a society that frowns on gay life. But the movie is disconsolate because of the prodigal use of characters. After watching the movie one may say that India is loaded with homosexuals and transgenders. Everyone is into everyone else without the slightest idea of why. That said, one must also admit that all these issues are overshadowed with the surreal beauty of the film. The bizarre colours, the excellent cinematography and of course the hot Indian characters make the movie a must watch.



Shelter

Niket

A confused young artist is torn between his family and his future in this sensitive romantic drama from writer and director Jonah Markowitz. Set in the working-class San Pedro area of Los Angeles, the movie centers on Zach, a short-order cook. Between shifts Zach pursues a desultory relationship with his girlfriend, Tori, and acts as surrogate father to his 5-year-old nephew, Cody. His real passion, however, is painting, expressed in the graffiti he sprays on neighborhood buildings and in the art-school dreams that his selfish sister is determined to sabotage.

Everything changes when Zach finds himself drawn to Shaun (Brad Rowe), a confident writer and eager enabler of all of Zach's passions. As the two hit the surf and Shaun's mattress with equal enthusiasm, the

movie's abundance of tanned bodies, rolling waves and golden sunsets create an aesthetic of inoffensive hedonism that perfectly matches the subject matter.

Shaun and Zach develop a friendship that develops into a true, intimate relationship. Shaun presses Zach to take control of his life, and to take ownership of his artwork. He also develops a strong bond with Cody, and Zach happily notices the positive effect Shaun's attention has on him. As time progresses, however, a host of new issues come up. Zach struggles with his identity, his family, and friends, while trying to understand the new emotions Shaun has brought into his life. When the cat is let out of the bag, Jeanne threatens to take Cody away.

Wanting nothing but the best for him, Zach is forced to decide between his pattern of always putting others' desires first or fighting for what is really most important and appropriate for both his and Cody's future.

"Shelter" is less about erotic soul-searching than about defining one's boundaries. And if at times the symbolism is a bit heavy-handed and the ending is easily foreseen. Coming out has rarely looked so pretty.



The Bubble

Arijit Singh



Sometimes we might think that we live in a bubble, in our own world, without paying heed to the day-to-day violence-war-hatred-etcetera spread around us. Two lovers may forget the world. *Hu-Buah* (or 'the Bubble'), in Hebrew language, presents before us the short "insignificant" lifespan of Noam and Ashraf. Insignificant because no matter how many lives it gobbles, the monster of war never seems to cease its hunger and this relativity makes 'love' insignificant (Pardon the pessimistic me!). This movie in its preproduction stage was to be named '*Romeo & Julio*'. So '*The Bubble*' is a 21st century romantic tragedy in which the lovers are not only gay but also they belong to two separate races and religions which seemingly hate each other since the birth of mankind (Why can they not peace out?)

The Bubble is the latest film by Eyton Fox, top notch director of Israeli Cinema. Openly gay Eyton has done many similar projects in his career and has always come up with a different theme and genre each time. Though romanticism always has been a main part of his films, he has proficiently depicted various issues and many aspects of Israeli life. Thus his movies can be a window to Israel and the country's tolerance of LGBT people for the world audience.

The central theme is kind of obvious when I say that it is a modern *Romeo & Juliet*. But let me warn you before you jump to any conclusions that this is cliché cinema. No, it is not.

Under the very keen and smart direction *The Bubble* proves itself a refreshing flick. The film is about Noam, a young gay guy who while working at a checkpoint on his reserve duty happens to lock eyes with a young Palestinian man there, Ashraf. After finishing his military duty, Noam returns to Tel-Aviv where he lives with another gay man, Yelli who works in a restaurant, and the flamboyant girl Lulu. They lead a happy-go-lucky life. And one day Ashraf comes to their place and love stems between Noam and Ashraf.

The film can boast of several memorable scenes: one of them is when Ashraf comes to Noam's place to return his passport and then on the terrace, while Noam shows him the skyline of the city, Ashraf kisses him. Another beautifully done scene is that of their love making. The climax is almost iconic.

Coming on the acting part and the cinematography I want to once again applaud the director. The entire cast especially the four main characters have done an excellent job by acting as naturally as possible, there is no hint of articulation while they delivered their dialogues. At the end of this review, all I can say is that it's refreshing, cute and provides perspective. Watch it without any reservations and you will enjoy it.

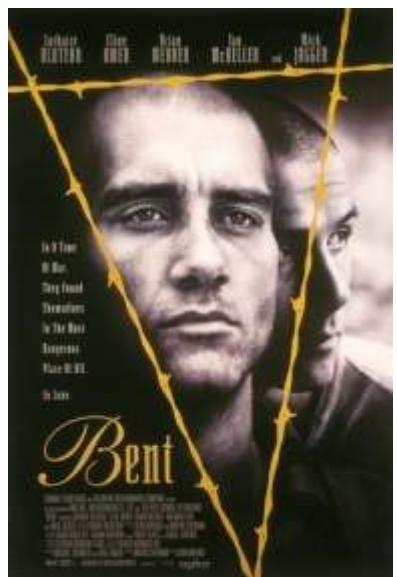
Bent

Ratnesh

Directed by Sean Mathias and adopted from a play by Martin Sherman, *Bent* features the persecution of gays in Nazi Germany. *Bent* is a harrowing portray of the inhumane treatment of homosexuals by the Nazis, a subject overlooked by many writers. Though the brutalities of the Nazis have been kept off-screen, the movie is dark and unsettling.

As *Bent* opens, Max (Clive Owen) attends an orgy played by the drag queen Greta (Mick Jagger) when the club is raided by the police. Max and his lover Rudy (Brian Webber) manage to escape, but they are later arrested and are forced into a train to the Dachau concentration camp. Max betrays Rudy and makes a 'deal' with the Nazi officers, to get a yellow star (the one for the Jews) instead of the pink triangle (the one for gays). He had greater chances of survival as a disdained Jew rather than a disdained homosexual.

In the concentration camp Max falls in love with his fellow prisoner Horst (Lothaire Bluteau) who proudly wears a pink triangle. Horst shows him how to love and live freely even under the constant psychological tortures they face in the camp. Bare chest, exposed to the

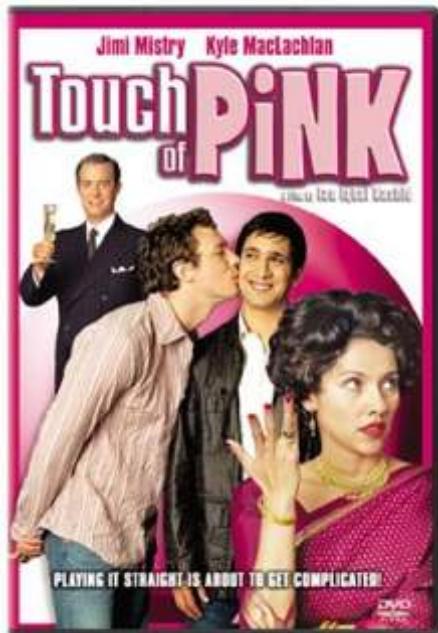


hot summer, not looking at or touching each other, they engage in imaginary sex. This is the tenderest and the most painful love scene ever one can see in any movie or TV show.

Bent is not just a 'gay holocaust' or a 'love tragedy'. It is for the people who are willing to see a powerful movie about love and salvation. It is intense, moving, and completely unforgettable. So see it and be moved.

Touch of Pink

Karan Sood



Touch of Pink, directed and written by Ian Iqbal Rashid, is the story of Alim, a young gay Ismaili Muslim man living in London, miles away from his mother, Nuru in Toronto. The reasons for this distance are quite obvious; he can't come out of closet to his mother and relatives. Secondly, He can't leave his love, Giles, Caucasian economist working for UNICEF. Alim has an imaginary friend, Cary Grant, whose advices are very effective in letting him into troubles. All four characters are strikingly built from head to toe, especially the mother and the son.

Touch of Pink touches many Pink Pages | November 09

previously untouched aspects of immigrant communities, creating an intense plot of the relationship of a mother and her gay son. Ian Iqbal Rashid's romantic comedy rests not just over coming out conflicts, but also deals with the cultural clash along with the adoring love story of Alim and Giles. The story had effectively portrayed the hardships of coming out of the closet, and even concluded with a positive note with the eventual acceptance of a gay son by his mother.

The screenplay has been kept simple; giving it a pleasant flow with succinct dialogues. On screen, Jimi Mistry (Alim) and Suleka Mathew (Nuru) have done an excellent job. The movies didn't receive much acclaim by critics, with only four nominations in all at various film festivals in Canada. But overall, I would say that these 92 minutes deserve at least a one time watch.

And if you are planning to come out of closet, do watch this! May be you would like to watch it again with your mom!

She was humiliated, she was assaulted, and she was raped and finally shot to death, just because she was a transgender man.

Boys don't cry

Karan Sood

Boys Don't Cry is an American independent drama film based on the true story of Brandon Teena, a transgender man who attempts to hide the fact that he has female genitalia to avoid discrimination. Directed by Kimberly Peirce, the film features Hilary Swank as Brandon Teena and Chloë Sevigny as Brandon's girlfriend Lana Tisdel. Pierce had successfully created intense emotional savagery, without fictionalizing the true facts of the account. It has effectively thrown light on the darker shades on Brandon's life, portraying the confusions, uncertainties, and seclusion in her life. The complete crew has done an excellent job in the making the movie a great success.

Boys Don't Cry received tremendously positive acclaim from critics, especially the two lead performances from Swank and Sevigny, and considering its reasonably low budget, and independent production, it was a box office success, with most of the success coming from word of mouth and critical views. Swank was awarded the 1999 Academy Award for Best Actress, and Sevigny was nominated for the Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress. Winning under 41 categories of various film festivals, it was nominated for 68 categories.



The L Word

I am not a lesbian. I am not even a lesbian trapped in a man's body. When my wife dresses me, I may have incidental metrosexual tendencies, but clearly I am not *The L Word*'s target demographic. And yet, for four and a half seasons I've been watching the sapphic Showtime soap about a clique of close-knit Los Angeles lesbians who hop from bed to bed with such alacrity that one of them actually keeps score on a wall-size chart in her apartment. I even watch the talky bits.

That's the brilliance of *The L Word*. It combines earnest social commentary on contemporary gender-identification issues this season there's a plotline about a lesbian war hero getting booted out of the Army for sexual misconduct with lots of hot chicks making out. Sure, it's soft-core porn, but coated with a PC patina that makes it slightly less embarrassing when you get caught looking. It's not often you run across erotica that works this hard to raise your, um, consciousness. It's *Red Shoe Diaries* with a women's-studies degree from Smith College.

Of course, once you strip away the sex and gender polemics, the R-rated melodrama can appear pretty, well, bare. It's largely an endless loop of girl-meets-girl stories. Dramatic resonance and plot continuity apparently aren't a high priority in the writers' room. Characters are sometimes given new personalities

(not to mention orientations) from one season to the next, story arcs are half constructed and left abandoned (what the heck happened to Papi, the Latina limo driver?), and cliff-hangers are elaborately set up only to be nonsensically resolved before the show's end. I'm no Aaron Spelling, but they're supposed to be left hanging, right? Otherwise they're just...cliffs.

To be fair, this season the writing does show signs of improving. After a misguided attempt at abstinence, sinewy beautician Shane (Katherine Moennig) is once again carving a Warren Beatty-like swath through the bedrooms of Beverly Hills. And whiny author Jenny Schecter (Mia Kirshner) has been outfitted with a much more amusing way to be annoying: Ever since her book became a best-seller, she's been a raging Hollywood diva. I still don't care whether Bette and Tina (Jennifer Beals and Laurel Holloman) get back together L.A.'s dullest couple have been dancing around a reconciliation for two seasons now and waffling transsexual Max (Daniela Sea) really should make up his/her mind about what gender he/she would like to be. (In one recent episode, there was talk that the character was actually a gay man trapped in a pre-op body.) Still, I'll keep watching. And not just for the reasons you think. (ew review)



A picture... and a thousand words

Roy Sinai is an upcoming Bangalore-based photographer who jumped into this domain just recently, leaving behind a successful career as COO in Citibank and shifting his base from New York to India. Tushar talks to Roy as he tells us about his life, his career-shift, coming out, and of the old times when gay harassment was at its peak.

Pink Pages: Tell us a bit about your background

Roy: I'm basically a Goan, and am the eldest son in my whole extended family. I studied at Harvard, majoring in Economics. I've lived in eight countries as my father was in the Foreign Service. At 22, I joined Citibank in New York and was part of the project that involved building India's first ATM network.

Pink Pages: And the sudden shift into the world of photography?

Roy: I was working as COO, a proper executive job, something that I knew was a major achievement in my life. But something was amiss; I felt like I needed to take a sabbatical. I took a 6 month break during which I learnt Photography at the International Centre for Photography in New York. I might actually call it a mid-life crisis. I felt the need to evaluate direction, and re-evaluate my goals. I didn't have children to put in college; I didn't need to be part of the system for once.

My photography began from scratch, and in an arena where everyone else is in their mid 20's, it has been hard, but fun, to be able to catch up. I liked the prospect of starting my photography in India as it's just started catching up here, and with visual media being one of the most sought after fields, I think it has an immense potential.

Pink Pages: So why Bangalore?

Roy: I initially shifted because the company headquarters were here. My grandparents have lived here all their lives. Plus, there is an immense creative potential in India. Being all by yourself here is a feeling in itself; you don't feel loneliness here, but solitude. I had decided to shuttle between US and India, but it never worked out the way I wanted.

Pink Pages: Tell us about your coming out experience.

Roy: When I was 26, I had written a letter to my boyfriend and foolishly left it on the table. As was expected, mum and dad read it. The point of coming out is to rise up to the challenge truthfully; of being accepted and not rejected. "Do you want me to live a lie?" I asked them when I came out. "I told you this because I want you to give me the support I need to fight this, together. I want your love."

Coming out to myself was much more difficult, I'll say. In those times we didn't have the internet, or mobile phones. We used to have house parties outside at which I used to invariably end up fleeing from the door. I finally had the courage to go ahead one fine day. To my horror, I discovered that more than half the crowd there consisted of married men; here I was finally accepting myself, and I find myself in a room full of hypocrites!

Pink Pages: So why, according to you, is coming out important, that too in the present day scenario with homosexuality becoming more acceptable?

Roy: As far as society goes, ideas can be changed, culture evolves. The younger generation is more receptive of ideas, and hence we need to ensure that we cause a



Roy Sinai

change in the ideas of those who will make up the society; whose attitudes will be the whole society's attitudes. 70% of Indian population is under 25, meaning a lot more youth consciousness. Our schedules, our agendas are different. Youth today can be influenced in many ways, good or bad. The fact here remains is to not be invisible, and to not allow prejudice to continue happening. "You cannot be gay" are the words that come out of a prejudiced person. We need to chop that prejudice and give way to understanding. Because of their love for us and deeper understanding, when they know someone close to them is gay, they go up in arms to fight for us, showing support, because they can see that we're not that different from others. The point here lies in being seen; in not being invisible. The timing is now, and change can happen.

Pink Pages: Tell us about the blackmail experience and how things used to be way before gay rights were in focus

Roy: Financial independence emboldened me to do something about my curiosity. I created a new

identity for myself, complete with its own history and another name to share with others who, like me, cruised strange and dark places in cities around the country, especially when travelling on work. My two identities were watertight, and I thought quite safe, even from each other. It was a schizoid existence, made even more exciting by how cleverly I could fool everyone. But with the excitement came fear. And worse still, lies. My career continued its rapid rise, the stakes got higher, the efforts to conceal more elaborate.

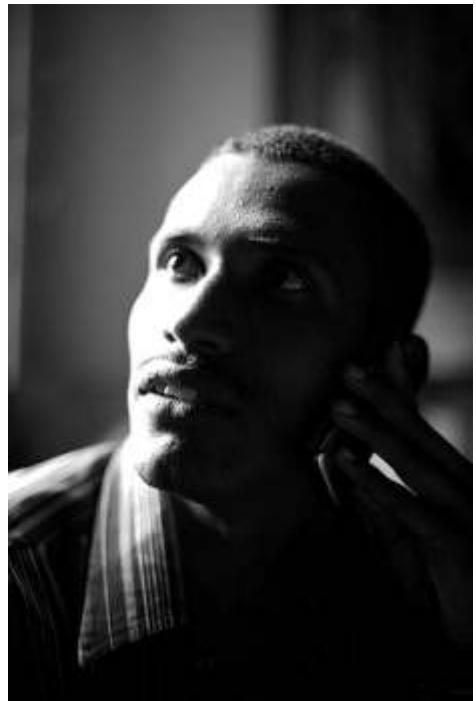
Then the shit hit the fan. I met a guy who connected the dots and boldly appeared at my office one day to ask for some help. It was a small request at first. A few thousand rupees. The shiver of fear that went through me the first time he walked into my office half-smiling, eyes shining coldly as he made his proposition had me dry in the mouth, heart racing. He was very polite, but very firm in his request. Not wanting to create a scene or a confrontation, I capitulated. The blackmail continued. My blackmailer would appear with increasing frequency. And then one fine day I just could not take it anymore. It took a great deal to first accept myself, gather up the courage to fight this harassment. I went and consulted my lawyer, rather than staying in hiding and being harassed more. We set up a trap and he was caught by the police, who later on found that he was a serial blackmailer and had a whole list of VIPs on his list. I did cross paths with him once after the incident, where he hurled abuses, to which I replied that he could go on and tell everyone about me, because now everyone knew. I think that is when he realized that he could no longer harass me. Fear comes from within. During my time, 377 had not been amended, and the law was not on my side. Today, the law is on our side, and that's what should

encourage people to come out, so that once can live without the fear, of being harassed, of being prejudiced against.

Pink Pages: So what kind of themes do you like to portray through your photography?

Roy: Commercially, I do all kinds of photography, architectural being primarily dominant. But personally I like doing portraits. I like exploring the geography of the face, trying to bring out the truth and honesty in it. Spaces, faces, and places that's what my photography is basically about. I like to think that what's outside is a reflection of what's on the inside. I dabbled in all fields to find out what my calling was; yes money was limited and photography did deplete my resources to an extent, but I guess that comes with everything that you begin from scratch.

I don't want to be known as a photographer who's gay or who shoots gay themes; that is just part of what I do. My main motive is to help people become more self aware; more understanding of their prejudices. I aim to empower people and make them introspect through my photography and other artistic ventures. When truth becomes your compass, one is able to keep moving in the right direction even in difficult and detrimental situations. "You are the change you look for", said Gandhi, and that's what we need to realize. Uniqueness exists in all systems, and all we need to do is realize that everyone is a unique facet of our society, and that without this uniqueness no society can exist, and without acceptance neither can we co-exist.



Enchant of Love Part- II

My bird watching flair found itself at a better disposition as usual, and this time the results were even better. I imagined myself as a screening machine with the search criteria 'Hot, handsome, sexy ...' I expected the server not to return "Too many parameters for search or your search returned 0 entries!" I found Pune decent enough to harbour good guys, I had developed a peculiar scale of rating a city based on the number of decent guys I saw while staying there. I knew this was very irrational, but why shouldn't I think my own ways, after all I am just trying to rate a city based on my passion. While I vaguely defined my preferences and wouldn't at all discriminate based on color or caste, but sometimes I really look confused as to what my parameters were for deciding whether a guy turned me on. I always felt I would be able to figure out my likings crystal clear, but every time I tried, it turned futile. And given the context of love, I had been a loser so far, especially when I had fallen in love with a straight boy. That calls for another discussion which I would prefer to jot down sometime later.

We had booked a night sleeper coach bus for our onward journey to Goa. I would rate this part of the prose interesting as by god's grace I was lucky enough to have a twist in my mundane life. The bus started at around 8:00 pm. It was supposed to take ten hours to reach Goa. I was allotted one berth and my mom and dad another. I discovered that one berth was large enough for two people; in fact it was a double berth. So, I thought that I was lucky to get all over myself in a double berth. It made me happy as I thought I wouldn't have any problems sleeping at night due to space constraints.

I could see two beautiful girls in the passengers' lot. I was pleased that at least I would have some eye tonic to relish, if not better guys. The later clause really disappointed me as I could identify uncles and grandpas among the rest!

The bus stopped after sometime, and I heard more people boarding it. One boy crawled onto my berth. I was disturbed at the same time happy. I found out that the boy was of my age, and this made me feel good. I couldn't see much of his body as he was wearing a woolen jacket. He kept his small bag, near our feet, and settled down in a more or less reclining position. "Hi!" he said.

Then it was very odd not to talk with somebody with whom I was supposed to spend the entire night. I started off, "Hi! Are you going to Goa?" It was a sheepish start as I should have guessed that the bus wouldn't have any more stops before it reached, but couldn't manage anything better.

"Yes, you have the same destination I believe?" he gestured.

I nodded and then introduced myself, "I am Mohan, I have just completed my third semester engineering exams, and now we are on a tour of Maharashtra and Goa."

"Hey that's cool, I am Neel. I am studying second year B.Com in Pune. Pleased to meet you," he replied. I started thinking about my prospect with this boy for the rest of the night.

I couldn't help but carry on

chatting with him, somehow I wouldn't act indifferent. Being introvert by nature, it was not always possible for me to build rapport with strangers, but given the current context, I got some enthusiasm to go ahead.

"Is your native Goa?" I asked.

"Yes, I was born and brought up there, what about you?"

"Well, I am from a so called state," I added "Tell me something about Goa."

"Where are you planning to stay?" he asked.

"Dad has booked a room in his company guest house near a place called Miramar."

"Hey that's great dude; my house is also near Miramar."

"Oh, I see," I said.

I found out from him that the bus would stop once more for dinner, and then it would move until it reached Ponda. He continued the discussion about places of interest in Goa. He talked about North Goa & South Goa, the various beaches and also the famous churches. We were growing friendly in this way.

"Be there at Calangute beach, it's a place where you can see lots of foreign chicks having sun bath."

"Oops! I need to be careful while watching, you know, my parents will be around!" I said.

"You better be careful," he winked. We laughed at this point which made us cozier.

I was having a mixed feeling about

Neel; I liked his poise. I also found out from our conversations that Neel was a Konkani. He would be staying in his home for the same period, i.e. seven days, the same as we would stay in Goa.

I was interested to know about the place where a particular scene of DCH was shot, the one in which the three guys were sitting on the border of a broken fort with the seamless sea in front.

“Its Chapora Fort, you have to climb a lot in order to get there, as private vehicles are not allowed after a certain point; this fort is near Vagator beach.” he was descriptive.

“You need to be with friends to enjoy Goa, no offences, but you would find it a bit boring with your parents,” he said.

Goa, from my perception, was a place for water sports & scuba diving. I was always ebullient whenever I saw scuba divers on National Geographic or Discovery. I asked, “Any idea about scuba diving near the beaches?”

“That's a fantastic sport; I have not done myself, but have seen people doing it. They need some specialized paraphernalia.”

“So, does that require any training, before you can actually go on a real tour?” I asked.
“Of course dude, novices cannot dive in just for fun!”

“And what are the equipments required?”

“I have some idea; you require a mask for seeing clearly through water, a snorkel for breathing, a pair of fins for gliding, and a few more. Good equipments will

accentuate your dive experience and keep you safe.” I liked the way the information was shared precisely by him.

“So, do you have plans for scuba diving?” he asked.

“My parents will never allow, I can't just think of!” I frowned.

“That's sad, but in a way that's helpful as well, because you never get into any sort of trouble.”

“And what about water-biking?” I continued the discussion.

“Oh yes, you can definitely do that at Calangute, the spot boys are helpful and they will take care that you don't fall off!”

“Hey! That sounds quite interesting,” I said and added
“How much do they charge?”

“Guess around hundred bucks for fifteen minutes or so.”

“But that's too much!” I exclaimed.

“That's the going rate here dude!”

It was time for dinner. I introduced him to my parents. He felt comfortable even with my parents. My father was happy to find someone from Goa. So he started enquiring him about things we needed to know in order to enjoy our stay and visit the places of interest. Neel, as usual, was very informative and briefly discussed almost everything he was aware of.

My father had high regards for Neel's branch of study. This was because my dad had done a

Masters in Commerce, but he always relented about not having applied his knowledge the way he would have liked to at his current job. He used to encourage me a lot to read Economics. I remember those stressful nights when my father would explain me everything I needed to know for the ten-mark economics section in class ten board exams and I would say at the end, that I didn't understand a major portion of it! The way he used to get pissed off, and then start all over again. I admired his tenacity and patience. I didn't do justice to his efforts at the exams, not because I didn't try, but some fool preferred not to give me what I deserved while awarding marks. Now seeing a person from the same line of study dad was really excited. They discussed the future course of career, something which I was not able to make heads or tails about.

My mom also discussed a couple of things with him, but not related to his course of study. We were sitting closely as a family, with Neel beside us. I noticed that he was tall and dark, taller than me by a few inches. He had solemn eyes, which sparkled with the intellectual brilliance in him, and a long nose.

A turbulence of thoughts had initiated in my mind with so much happening in front of me. I was scared to think that I would ever initiate anything spicy with this boy. If I would misbehave, firstly, he might find it very odd. Secondly, I wouldn't get to see him for the rest of the tour. I was so comfortable talking to him, within such a short time, and I wanted him to be with me for the period of stay in Goa. I thought, I wouldn't get bored, and it would be fun with him accompanying us during our sight-seeing. I didn't want to spoil

it doing anything unwarranted in the later portion of the night. I had to take a decision, and rightly so, I thought in the correct direction. I relinquished hopes of anything special happening that night. I wouldn't give it a second thought even. I could figure out from the conversations we had, that he was not oriented otherwise.

So when we came back after dinner, I started gathering more information about him. I knew his college or course of study wouldn't be of any special interest for me, so I didn't prefer any discussions on that arena.

"Do you have siblings?"

"Yes, I do, one brother and one sister, what about you?"

"I am the single offspring of my parents."

"That's kind of cool, ain't it? You get the complete share of love and care," he mused.

I was not amused, I always felt the need of a brother or a sister, and I craved for that. I knew it was impossible. The special love and bonding one develops while growing with his siblings is a fantastic experience altogether. Subtle arguments, then making up, caring, all these touch of emotions had always haunted me. I would often feel an unfathomable emptiness lingering within me, which could never ever fill up. Deep in my soul a quiet amber knew, it was me against me, it was the apparent paradox that drove me on towards de-alienating, turning acquaintances into friends and sharing some true feelings with them.

So, I told him, "You don't realize the value of people you have

around you, I do, as I have none. Only a blind person can tell what it feels being able to see the slightest of worldly lights."

"Co 'on dude, I just said like that, don't get sentimental."

"Actually you know what; I have felt the solitude without a sibling, which even I had told my mom. My mom had tried to console me saying a few kind words but it doesn't really help much."

He understood the gravity of the discussion he had sparked off! In an attempt to change the topic he started asking me about college.

"I understand, anyway don't worry much, friends are always there at the time of need. Tell me about your friends at college, do you have a girlfriend?"

"No, I didn't have that luck, though I have some feelings for one in our class," I sighed.

"Interesting! Why don't you tell her?" he wondered.

"It's a different story dude, will tell you if I get the opportunity," I said.

"Ok, if you are not at ease now."

"What about you Neel?" I quizzed.

"I had one, when I was at school, we broke off due to some differences, now I am single and not looking."

"Why not looking? Haven't you yet recovered from the break-off?" I asked.

"It's not like that, there are some other problems, which I need to sort out now, I won't burden you

with my difficulties dude," he smiled.

We kept quiet for sometime, respecting each other's need of doing so. Meanwhile I started thinking about him as a prospective friend, even though we had been just acquaintances for a few hours. I gathered some courage and spoke again "Neel can I request you for something?"

"Sure, go ahead!"

"Would you please accompany us during our sight seeing?" I urged.

He thought for a moment, and then said "I am not sure, if I can be there with you all through, but yes of course I won't say a complete 'no'. I have some plans while I am at home."

"What about tomorrow?" I enquired.

"I have a function at home, which would be over by evening."

"No chances of meeting you then?"

"I didn't say that, we can meet after dusk, may be, go out for a stroll on Miramar beach," Neel proposed.

"Wow! Miramar has a beach, that's great!" I was exuberant.

"There's nothing wow about that beach dude, it's not good enough for bathing. But that place is the confluence of Mandovi River with the Arabian Sea. You can also see a lighthouse in the distance that's the Aguada Fort," Neel was eloquent as ever.

"Ok, then will I call you around, say 8:00 pm? Will that be fine?" I asked.

("To be continued...")



VIRTUAL WORLD

Himadri Roy

Nowhere to go,
Orthodox traditions,
Reality stops with cruelty,
Physical painful tortures,
Claustrophobic relationships.
Nowhere to go, No refuge
anywhere,
Claustrophobic understandings,
For a change of my reality,
In the name of religious beliefs.
Nowhere to go, Following tracks of everyone,
No place for my real self,
Taking shelter in virtual world,
Hands of conceptual warmth.
Hugging me tightly,
Exuberances of emotional touch,
Consoling my ruthless existence,
Into the lines of optic fibers and
internet.

ECHO

Maryam Laith

Questions of Lust, Passion and Love
Your touch moves me in ways
unknown to me before:
gliding softly over my curves,
rising with my breathing,
caressing my soul with your
gentleness.
How is it that I never knew love like
this?
I ache for you,
and burn with a desire stoked
to higher flame by your presence,
my body yearning out for yours,
again, once more, again, forever.
Please.
Is this what it is to feel passion?
You move toward me,
and I shiver with emotion
centered so deep in my core
that my whole form resonates
from its echo,
shaming me with the intensity of its
heat,
of my heat, for you.

Government stays mum on gay sex



Refusing to take any stand on gay sex, the government virtually left it for the Supreme Court to decide on the “correctness” of the Delhi High Court order decriminalizing homosexuality. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh,

considered the report of the three-member Group of Ministers formed on the issue and decided that Attorney General G Vahanvati will “assist” the Supreme Court on it. “The Cabinet decided to ask the Attorney General to assist the Supreme Court in every way desired by it in arriving at an opinion on the correctness of the judgment of the High Court,” Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni told reporters.

Section 377 an instrument of exploitation: Moily

Apprehending misuse of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against homosexuals in the future, law minister Veerappa Moily has said the law should not become an instrument of exploitation by authorities. Moily while admitting that the anti-gay law had been misused in the past, complimented the Delhi High Court for a “well-research, well-documented, well-argued” judgement decriminalising homosexuality. “If it has been misused earlier, it can be misused in future as well. Any law should not be used as an instrument of exploitation, harassment or allow the authority to misuse it. “This is one such provision that has a tendency of misuse and exploitation, and has been misused,” Moily said in a TV programme. “One thing must go to the credit of the Delhi High Court judgement. It is well-documented, well-researched, well-argued. I must tell the judges...the subject may be difficult, but at the same time this is one judgement, which has really stood out in the judicial annals of this country,” he said.

Pointing out that several laws



enacted in the pre-Independence British Raj contradicted the Constitution and may not stand scrutiny, he said, adding that such laws include some sections of the IPC and the Evidence Act. “We have a Constitution many a times the Constitution runs parallel to many laws which were enacted earlier to the Constitution coming into force. This includes many provisions including some of the sections under the IPC or the Evidence Act,” Moily said. “Many of these things (laws), if put to acid test of the Constitution, they may not stand up to the scrutiny. This is the apprehension,” he added. The Law Minister said either the Constitution makers did not anticipate this situation or a review of the laws or the Constitution should have taken place for properly synchronising the two.

Thousands participate in Mumbai's gay pride march



Nearly three thousand people took to the streets of Mumbai on 16th August for the annual Pride parade called the Queer Azadi March, in celebratory mood after a landmark court ruling advocating an end to a ban on gay sex. Gays, lesbians, transvestites and transsexuals plus their heterosexual supporters plied a circular route around the south of the city, walking and dancing to the beat of drummers and loud music. The march comes after judges at the Delhi High Court ruled that a ban on homosexual acts, in place since British colonial times in 1860, was discriminatory and violated an individual's rights under the constitution.

*I'm not gay but my boyfriend is.
Bumper sticker*

*Is life not a hundred times
too short for us to stifle
ourselves.
Friedrich Nietzsche*

US gay rights march pushes for equality while Obama pledges action

On 12 October, tens of thousands of gay rights supporters marched in Washington DC calling for equal rights for LGBT Americans in all fifty states. The main demands of the marchers were- repeal of the US military's "Don't ask Don't Tell" policy under which thousands of gays and lesbians have been discharged, repeal of the Clinton era "Defense of Marriage Act", and federal anti-discrimination laws. President Obama, a day earlier, in an address to the country's largest gay rights group- the Human Rights Campaign, had promised to do away with anti-gay legislations and showed his support for gay domestic partnership laws. Many have accused Obama on backtracking on his promises to LGBT voters. The march was USA's largest gay protest since nine years.



2 killed in attack on Israeli gay center

A lone gunman has killed two people and wounded at least 10 at a gay support centre in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv on 2nd August before escaping. Most of the victims were gay teenagers, who were meeting at the centre on Nachmani street when the gunman entered and started

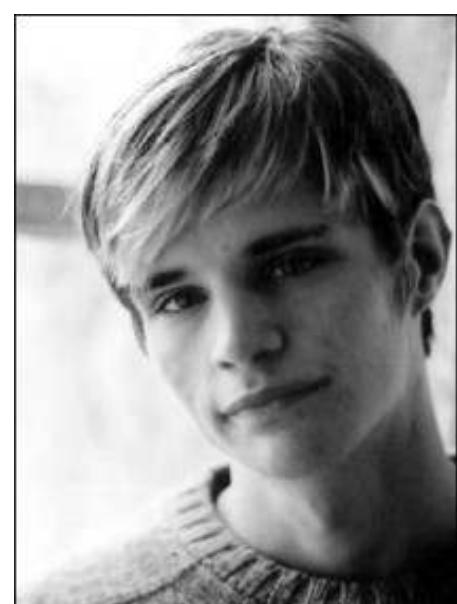
firing indiscriminately. The black-clad man is still at large and police have ordered the temporary closure of all gay clubs in the city. Gay leaders say it is Israel's worst-ever hate crime against the community. Hundreds of lesbian and gay Israelis held a rally and lit



candles in Tel Aviv in protest at the shooting. One woman said she was "terrified, shocked, surprised, amazed" by the attack "because it was so unexpected".

Matthew Shepherd Act passes US Congress

The Matthew Shepard Act, or the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, passed Congress. It will expand the 1969 United States federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. Some conservatives who opposed the act originally did so fearing that this act would muzzle free speech regarding homosexuality. They were afraid that making comments stating that homosexuality is immoral would be construed as inciting violence against them. The act as passed contains the following provision, "Nothing in this Act...shall be construed to prohibit any expressive conduct protected from legal prohibition by, or any activities protected by the free speech or free exercise clauses of, the First Amendment to the Constitution." The inclusion of this provision alleviated some concerns regarding the prohibition of speech regarding homosexuality. Matthew Shepard was a student at the University of Wyoming who was murdered near Laramie, Wyoming in 1998. His murder shocked the nation and spurred activism against anti-gay violence.



Kennedy hailed for supporting gay rights

Gay rights advocates say Sen. Ted Kennedy was a staunch supporter for their cause. Aravosis, who runs AmericaBlog a political site that often focuses on gay rights issues said it was Kennedy who sparked his interest in the movement. Kennedy co-sponsored the 1990 Ryan White CARE Act, which passed the same year. Later in 1996, he co-sponsored a bill to reverse the discharge of HIV-positive members of the military. He was also a staunch defender of hate crimes legislation in his Senate career. Kennedy was a

key sponsor of the 2009 Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act, named after young gay man who was killed. The bill was approved by the Senate in July. Kennedy also opposed the military's "Don't ask, Don't tell" policy adopted in 1993. The policy, which is still in place, ended the military's practice of asking potential service members if they were gay, but required the dismissal of openly gay service members.



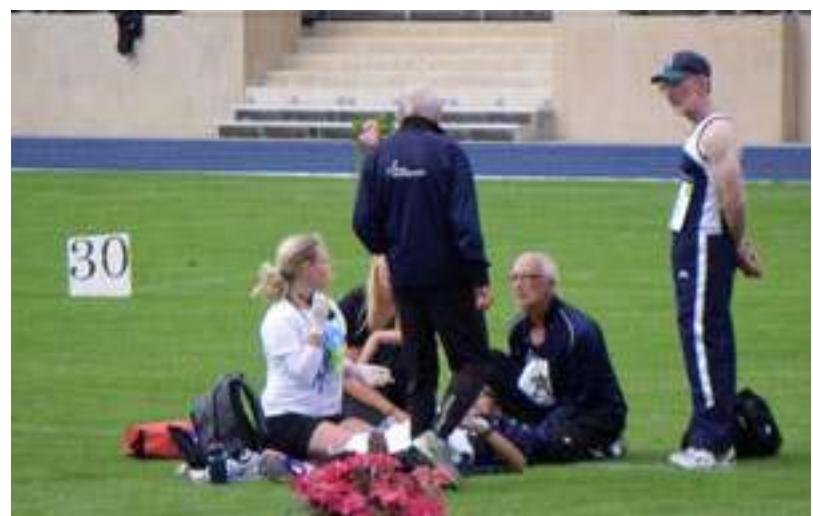
Is Israel ready for a gay PM?

"A poll published by the Hebrew-language daily *Yediot Aharonot* on Friday showed that nearly half of Israelis surveyed are ready for a gay prime minister, reports *The Jerusalem Post*. Among respondents, 25% said they were certain they were ready for a gay prime minister, and 19% said they thought they were ready. Some 13% said they were unsure, while 7% said they were not ready, and 11% did not answer. The poll came days after an Israeli gay center was attacked by unknown gunmen.



Bombs explode on Outgames track

An athlete was injured and other participants were frightened when three bombs were thrown onto a track during the World Outgames at Copenhagen before a relay race. One was only a few feet from where a sleeping infant had been only moments before. Says Outsports, "Danish police arrested a 31-year-old man caught after tossing the third bomb and charged him with a hate crime, according to Danish media. The suspect was carrying a backpack containing another half-dozen or so bombs.... The devices that exploded on the track were described as being powerful, about 9 inches in length, with a blue plastic covering and a fuse that was burning after it landed."



Delhi

Gay Delhi Sunday Socials

Sunday

A weekly social gathering for gay and bisexual men. For more information on venues and timings and to know about other gay events in Delhi, join the GayDelhi email list by sending a blank email to gaydelhi-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

The Delhi Frontrunners and Walkers

Sunday

A weekly running/walking club for Delhi's LGBTI people. For more details email frontdel@gmail.com

Mumbai

Gay Bombay Sunday Meet

Sun, 6:00 pm

JATC (Just Around the Corner)
Bandra West. Entry free. For more details, visit the GayBombay website.

Bengaluroo

Gay Runners and Breakfast

Sun, 8:30 am to noon

Gay runners meet at Cubbon Park and Airlines Hotel

Contact: 98450-01168

Support Group Meeting

Thur, 7-9pm

Good As You is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender support group.

Mail

goodasyoublr@googlemail.com

Naz Dost Helpline for gay men.

Monday to Saturday 1-7 pm
The Naz Foundation also hosts weekly meetings and support groups for men.
Call for details (011-2981-2287)

Sangini Helpline

Tuesday noon 3 pm, Friday 6-8 pm

Sangini provides confidential advice for women who are attracted to women.
Call for details (011-6567-6450)

ICWO Lesbian helpline (Chennai)

Monday Friday 9.00 AM to 6.00 PM

A dedicated helpline for Lesbians by the ICWO (Indian community welfare organization) in association with Action Aid
Call for details(044-6551-5742)

TARSHI Helpline

Monday-Wednesday 10 am-4 pm

Confidential and anonymous counseling and referrals on sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

Call for details (011-2437-2229)

Alternative Law Forum

Mon- Fri, 9:30 am- 6:30 pm

The forum provides legal services related to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights.

122/4, Infantry Road,
Bengaluru
(2286-8757)

Lawyers' Collective

Mon-Fri, 9am 6pm

This collective works on issues related to discrimination on grounds of HIV and AIDS
First floor, 4A- MAH Road, Tasker Town, Shivajinagar, Bengaluru (4123-4130)

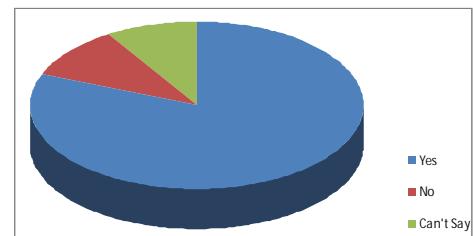
LESBIT

Sat 3:30- 6:30 pm, Sun 11:30 am 6:30 pm

LESBIT is an organization that offers counseling for lesbians and the transgender community
Call for details (99452-31493)

Opinion Poll

Are you hopeful that the new UPA Government will be positively disposed towards gay rights in the coming five years?



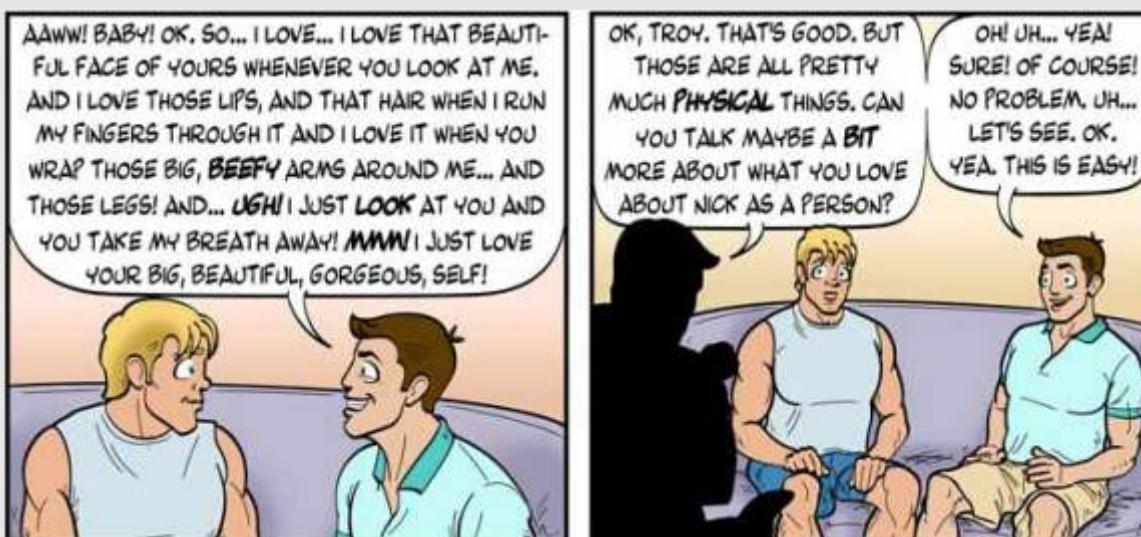
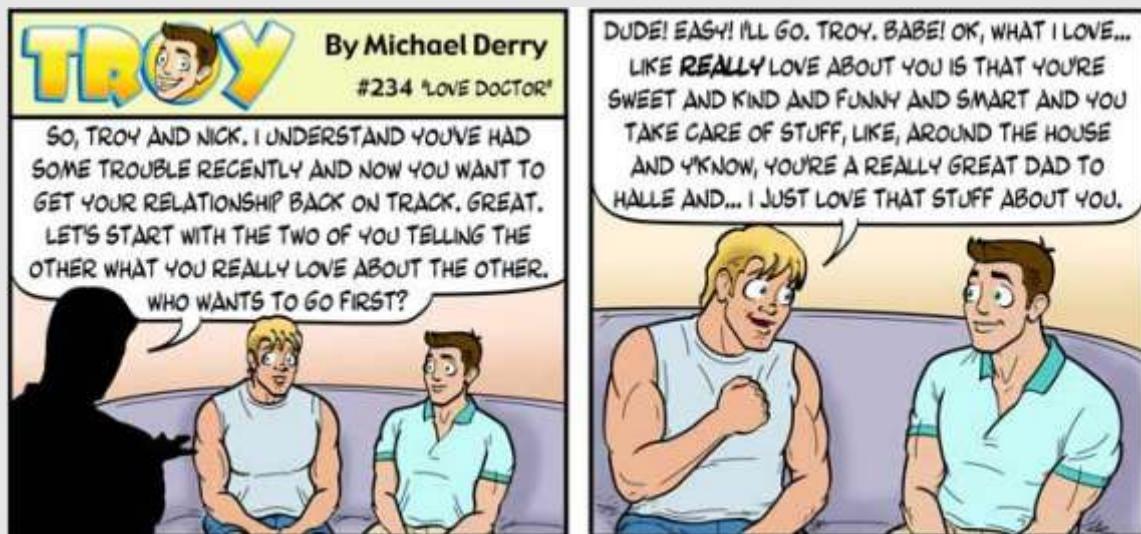
Yes: 81%

No: 10%

Can't Say: 9%

(Total Votes: 1852)







John invited his mother over for dinner. During the meal, his mother couldn't help noticing how handsome John's roommate was. She had long been suspicious of Johns' sexual orientation and this only made her more curious.

Over the course of the evening, while watching the two interact, she started to wonder if there was more between John and the roommate than met the eye.

Reading his mom's thoughts, John volunteered, "I know what you must be thinking, but I assure you, Mark and I are just roommates."

About a week later, Mark came to John and said, "Ever since your mother came to dinner, I've been unable to find the beautiful silver gravy ladle. You don't suppose she took it, do you?"

John said, "Well, I doubt it, but I'll write her a letter just to be sure." So he sat down and wrote: "Dear Mother, I'm not saying you 'did' take a gravy ladle from my house, and I'm not saying you 'did not' take a gravy ladle. But the fact remains that one has been missing ever since you were here for dinner."

Several days later, John received a letter from his mother which read:

"Dear Son, I'm not saying that you 'do' sleep with Mark, and I'm not saying that you 'do not' sleep with Mark. But the fact remains that if he was sleeping in his own bed, he would have found the gravy ladle by now. Love, Mom"

A wife was making a breakfast of fried eggs for her butchie. Suddenly, her butchie burst into the kitchen.

"Careful," she said, "CAREFUL! Put in some more butter! Oh my GOD! You're cooking too many at once. TOO MANY! Turn them! TURN THEM NOW! We need more butter. Oh my GOD! WHERE are we going to get MORE BUTTER? They're going to STICK! Careful. CAREFUL! I said be CAREFUL! You NEVER listen to me when you're cooking! Never! Turn them! Hurry up! Are you CRAZY? Have you LOST your mind? Don't forget to salt them. You know you always forget to salt them. Use the salt. USE THE SALT! THE SALT!"

The wife stared at her. "What in the world is wrong with you? You think I don't know how to fry a couple of eggs?"

The butchie calmly replied, "I just wanted to show you what it feels like when I'm driving.

In a small cathedral a janitor was cleaning the pews between services when he was approached by the minister. The minister asked the janitor, "Could you go into the confessional and listen to confessions for me? I really have to go to the bathroom and the Widow McGee is coming. She tends to go on but never really does anything worthy of serious repentance, so when she's done just give her 10 Hail Mary's and

I'll be right back."

Being the helpful sort, the janitor agreed. Just as expected the Widow McGee came into the booth and started her confession. "Oh Father, I fear I have done the unforgivable. I have given into carnal thoughts and have had oral sex."

Stunned, the janitor had no idea how to handle this situation. Surely 10 Hail Mary's would not do. So, in a moment of desperation the janitor peered his head out of the confessional and asked an altar boy, "Son, what does the minister give for oral sex?"

In reply the altar boy said, "Two Snickers bars and a Coke." In a small cathedral a janitor was cleaning the pews between services when he was approached by the minister. The minister asked the janitor, "Could you go into the confessional and listen to confessions for me? I really have to go to the bathroom and the Widow McGee is coming. She tends to go on but never really does anything worthy of serious repentance, so when she's done just give her 10 Hail Mary's and I'll be right back."

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Seven ways to get the guy you want

1. Be clear about your desire/ need : What are you looking for? Just a sex mate, a hook up for one night or a soulmate for lifetime. Be clear about your needs - to yourself as well as to the other person. If you meet a person, without being clear about your needs, you may most likely end up in a confused state. Perhaps you will think about him as a soulmate on day one, but when he turns out to be a one night stand guy, I am sure you will feel hurt. So if you are looking for a soulmate, talk to him, understand him before going to bed. If you are looking only for a sex mate, then be sure you use condoms while enjoying on the bed, or maybe outside, if you guys are little more than plain vanila.

2. Socialize: There is life beyond your work too. Socialize with a capital S. Till the time, you don't meet people, how will you find the right guy for you. You need to kiss a lot of frogs to find your prince dear. No one will come and knock on your door, just for you. Here are a few ways to socialize- Visit networking sites, meet people in clubs, through friends. Talking to people in public transport is another innovative way to socialize. Join hobby classes.

3. Be genuinely interested in other people: Not only MEN, but other wise too, people do notice, if you are saying hello to them just for the sake of it or if you are really interested in them. If you really care, be genuinely interested in other men. I am sure other men will be genuinely interested in you as well. It is the universal law, you get what you give.

4. Look for Good things in others: Be Positive. (Not HIV positive stupid!) Try to find out good things

in others and appreciate the same. Tell them, how much you like it and rather help them in making it better. Lets say you like a guy who has a very good body, you should not only tell him about his good physique but help him in his endeavor to develop a great body. May be you can tell about a better physical trainer or even a better pair of shoes which he can wear to the gym.

5. Be the guy you want: You are looking for a drop dead gorgeous guy. 90% of handsome hunks would like to hang around with other handsome hunks. Hence you need to be smart enough. Hit a gym, Change your wardrobe, go to a hairstylist. I am sure, you will be more noticeable to your kind of guys, if you yourself are like them.

6. Hygiene: Please. Please. Please. Shower daily! Change your clothes, especially your inners. If you are not maintaining a moustache or beard properly then please shave before meeting the



guy. Use good deodorant and never forget to wear a smile. 99% of guys won't like a guy smelling of cum. (Though I wouldn't mind it if I am in kinky mood!)

7. Have Faith: I am not asking you to be religious, but be spiritual for sure. Just have faith and keep hanging, you will definitely get your kind of person, sooner or later. It is only a matter of time. You can obviously pray too. It has a lot of power. Think and imagine the kind of guy you would like to be with , and the universal forces will help you getting the same!

I've wondered what my sexuality might be, but I've never wondered whether it was acceptable or not. Anyway, who really cares whether I'm gay or straight?"

*George Michael
To Britain's Big Issue magazine*